

THREE
LETTERS

To a Gentleman Dissenting from the
CHURCH of *ENGLAND*.

By JOHN WHITE, B. D.
Sometime Fellow of St. *John's* College, *Cambridge*.



LONDON,
Printed for C. DAVIS against *Gray's Inn*, *Holbourn*,
and W. CRAIGHTON at *Ipswich*.
MDCCXLVIII.

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BY JOHN WHITE, B.D.
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MUSEUM

TO THE

Right Reverend Father in God

THOMAS

Lord Bishop of ELY.

MY LORD!

I WAS formerly led, by some particular Circumstances of my Life, to consider the Controversy between the Established Church and the Dissenters; and, in the Course of my Observations and Reflections upon Their ways, plainly perceiving, that Their most popular Objections against our Church might be justly retorted upon their own Churches; and, at the same time, taking notice, that

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this Topick, important as it is, had been, in a manner, over-looked, and hardly touched upon by Those who had gone before me in this Controversy; I thought it would be a Part very agreeable both to the Duty I owe the Church of *England*, and to the Goodwill I owe, and do really bear to our Dissenting Brethren, to make them sensible, so far as I was able, of this essential Flaw in the Cause they are maintaining against us. With this View, I published, three or four Years ago, these Letters, the Fourth Edition of which I now presume to offer, and humbly submit to your Lordship. And the World, I am satisfied, will allow, that I could not present, or submit Them, with greater Propriety, to any, than to a Prelate, whose Orthodoxy, and zealous Attachment to that excellent Constitution which I have undertaken to defend, is every where spoken of, and applauded.

When

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When I first published them, I had no other Views besides settling the Wavering, softening the Rigid, and, perhaps, convincing and reconciling here and there one, whose Mind should be open to Conviction, not incruusted with Prejudice, or an hereditary Aversion to the Church: And, I thank God, I have had the Satisfaction to be well informed, that They have not altogether failed of those Effects. But I had little Expectation, that what should be offered to the World by an obscure Person, of no Name or Station in the Church, would be a means of reviving, or ever awaken the Attention of the Publick to a Controversy, which had long lain neglected, as being thought, I suppose, so worn out, that nothing new could be said in it, or too mean in itself to employ the Pens of our great Scholars. And as I then esteemed these Papers altogether

a 3 unworthy

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unworthy of your Lordship's Patronage, and feared also they were composed of Materials of too *perishing* a Nature to be *preserved* by any Patronage whatever, I determined to seek for none, but to abandon Them to their Fortune, to be approved, or slighted, as it should happen. But the World (being in Good-humour, and disposed to shew itself indulgent to one, who was honestly, They saw, *endeavouring* at *something* whereby he might serve the Church of God) having given them a Reception somewhat more favourable than He before dared to look for, and your Lordship, in particular, having been pleased, in your late excellent Charge to your Clergy, and in a Manner very honourable to the Author, to express your Approbation of them, He has taken, now, the Liberty to prefix to them your venerable Name, not altogether,
He

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He owns, without Hope, that they may be thereby so effectually recommended, as to become more generally and extensively useful, and, perhaps, to be also rescued from that entire Oblivion and Neglect, which, it may be, they might have otherwise, in a little time, fallen into.

Sometime after, my Lord, I published a short Defence, and am now setting forth a Second and a larger, in Reply to an Adversary who has risen up against me, or rather, against the Church of *England*, with great Animosity, to say nothing harder of him. These also, though coming out by themselves, I humbly presume to recommend to your Patronage and Protection. The latter of these, I beg Leave to say, has something like a Pretence to sue for it; as it was kept, sometime, by *your Direction*, from seeing the Light, and now comes abroad, *with your Permission*.

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It seems, these Writings of mine were the remote Occasion of your Lordship's being led into some Correspondence with one of the learned'st and most eminent among the Dissenting Ministers in the Course of which, having received from him such *Declarations* and *Assurances*, as it was not unreasonable to hope, might, under the Influence and Direction of the Almighty, open a Way to that Union betwixt us, which, for our mutual Security, is so desirable, You, in your great Wisdom and Moderation, was pleased to intimate, that you judged it not adviseable, at that Juncture, to disturb the Minds of our Brethren with fresh Oppositions and Debates. Such an Intimation was enough for me: I readily, as your Lordship knows, and as became me, complied with it; and should have done so, though I had not had the Honour, as I have, of being entirely in the same Sentiments.

Yes,

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Yes, my Lord, I should have consented that all I have published, or am about to publish, in this Controversy, should be thrown by, or committed to the Flames, as Performances quite out of Date, and useless, if such an Event could be accomplished. You, my Lord, it must be confessed, have shewn a remarkable Readiness to receive Proposals, to admit of Conferences, (and no body could manage them with greater Address than your Lordship) and to enter into Measures for carrying on so good a Design. Indeed, you have done all that became you to do, to cherish it. And we have not the least Doubt of the ready Concurrence of the other my Lords the Bishops, and, indeed, of the main Body of the Clergy, throughout the Nation, for the effecting of it, provided it may be done without shaking Foundations, unsettling and endangering our present happy Constitution. May God

be merciful to us, and touch the Hearts also of our Dissenting Brethren, and incline Them, by his holy Inspiration, zealously to co-operate in this Work; a Work worthy the most serious Thoughts and earnest Endeavours of all *Englishmen* who are either Friends to the present happy Establishment in the State, or desire the Safety, the Glory, and Enlargement of the Church.

Your Lordship, and the whole World, now, I believe, is thoroughly sensible of the mighty Spread and Increase of Popery among us, within these few Years. The Priests, by creeping into the Houses of Protestants, and dispersing, audaciously, amongst them their poisonous Books; and the great Families of that Religion (which now seem, *in the Sight of this Sun*, and without the least Fear of Animadversion or Restraint, to have set up for making Profelytes) by the Help of their Schools and Seminaries,
by

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by the Influence of their Charities, if one may be allowed to call them so, by dispensing, with great Prudence and Oeconomy, their Smiles and their Frowns amongst their Protestant Servants, Neighbours, Tenants, and Dependants, by these Schemes and Managements, and others of various kinds, They seem, my Lord, to be now making almost as rapid a Progress in perverting the People, as their head-long MINION, two Years ago, did, in traversing the Land. And as a Union of Protestants, in Heart and Affection, put, then, a Stop to *his* Career, and drove him back to the Place from whence he came, so a Union and Agreement of Protestants, in the main Principles and Practices of Religion, would, in all likelihood, not only arrest *These* in the Course of their Conversions, by removing one of the most popular and prevailing Prejudices against the Religion of Protestants, but also, by strength-

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ning the Protestant Interest, put an entire end to all their Expectations of ever prevailing over Us. And if that could be now effected, and our religious Jars composed, amidst all the Noise and clatter of our Arms, it would be such a Distinction to this auspicious Reign, as the Union of the two Kingdoms, in the midst of a consuming War also, was to a late one.

But whatever becomes of That Point, this Advantage one would hope, We *must* gain by the Readiness which your Lordship, and the rest of my Lords the Bishops have shewn, or shall shew, to come to a Temper with our Dissenting Brethren, that those injurious Reflections which are constantly thrown upon you, in their popular Writings and Conversations, and which my Adversary, amongst the rest, has taken up, and make, without Question, great Impressions upon the Minds of many, to the Prejudice of the Church, will hence-

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henceforward cease. He is pleased to insinuate, that, * You cannot, surely, in your Consciences, believe their Schism to be so horrid, and so damning, and yet refuse to drop the Ceremonies, which you see to be the Stone of stumbling, — and that, you harden yourselves against the Cries of so many perishing and misguided Christians, and destroy the Souls for which Christ died, for the Sake of a few Things which you own to be indifferent. Surely, my Lord, before such a Censure, and That couched in such exaggerating and disrespectful Language, had been fixed upon You, They should have put You to the Trial! — However, all will be well, if They do it, now; and by some joint Declaration and Assurance, for Themselves, and their respective Churches, make it known to the World, that parting with the Ceremonies, and taking away a few indifferent Things, will

* Letter II. page 82.

really

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really give Content, and close the Breach: For then, I am satisfied, it will not remain long open. — I would fain, my Lord, *provoke them to Jealousy*, and stir up in Them that Love of Peace, and the Things that make for it, which they have found in your Lordship, and, I am pretty confident, will find in all the Ruling Part, both Ecclesiastical and Civil, of our Church.

As your Lordship was pleased, with these charitable and pacific Views, to direct my second Defence to be kept back a considerable time after it was finished, and the Press had expected it; so, I know You desire, as I also do, that it's appearing *now* may not be interpreted as a Renewal of Hostilities, but only, as a Pursuance of the same laudable Views, in another way. For, surely, it cannot be esteemed an improper way to dispose Them to surrender Themselves, and submit to the Church, upon fair and honourable

Condi-

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Conditions, to let Them see, that the Posts they are maintaining are untenable; Especially, if it appears to be done in a soldierly way, not by employing poisoned Weapons, nor by committing Outrage and Brutality, or by exercising upon 'em any unnecessary and wanton Severities, whereby They might be provoked to hold out with the greater Obstinacy. That the Style and Manner of these Performances was really such, much less offensive and disobliging than had formerly been usual, the Dissenters themselves did generally acknowledge at their first appearing; and I hope they will not appear otherwise to them *now*. It is, perhaps, their highest Character and Commendation, and has covered many Imperfections, which might have been otherwise found in Them. And I well, my Lord, remember, that what recommended Them to your Approbation (besides their defending the Church of *England*)

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England) was, first, the temperate manner in which they were composed, and then, their pointing out to our Brethren such a Symbolizing and Conformity between their present Ways, and ours, (which they seemed not before to be aware of) as may plainly shew Them, that their uniting with Us, even without Alterations, and much more upon the Foot of such Alterations as may, probably, be granted, in the Things scrupled, would be no *shocking*, nor any *mighty* Change; Your Lordship being of Opinion, that *This* might greatly contribute towards a Union, and pave the Way to it.

I have detained You, my Lord, a great while with these Matters, and will not be farther troublesome by entering upon another cold Detail, or by *designing* a warmer and higher Representation of those amiable Qualities and excellent Accomplishments, those social and Christian Virtues, and Episcopal

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copal Qualifications which so eminent-
 ly adorn and distinguish You: Espe-
 cially, as I am sensible it would not
 be executed by my Pencil, in a man-
 ner so perfect and masterly as your
 Lordship's Character demands. I must,
 therefore, in Prudence, decline this
 Task, for the more humble and less
 hazardous one, of making my Ac-
 knowledgments to your Lordship, for
 those indulgent Regards which you,
 on all Occasions, have been pleased to
 shew me. There may be, perchance,
 a little Vanity in telling the World, I
 have some Share in the Favour of so
 discerning a Prelate: But I protest to
 your Lordship, I am chiefly excited to
 it by my Gratitude, in as much as I feel
 my self, by your Countenance and
 Favour, not only animated in those
 little Services I am attempting to ren-
 der to the Publick, by these Writings,
 but also encouraged and supported un-
 der the Pastoral Cares which I have
b
been,

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been, from the Prime to the Decline of Life, sufficiently exercised withal. In the midst of these Labours, it has been, divers Years, my great Satisfaction, to have had a Diocesan so indulgently disposed towards me, to look upon me, and approve me.

You are now indeed, my Lord, by the Divine Permission, and the Pleasure of the King, snatched from us; and as every Accession of Honour and Prosperity to your Lordship is to me, as it ought to be, a Matter of rejoicing, I sincerely congratulate your Promotion to a *See*, which gives you no small Authority in that University to which you was before an Ornament, and affords you great Opportunities of doing good, and in various ways, particularly, of abounding, yet more and more, in all the Offices of Generosity, Charity, and Hospitality, which whoever knows the beneficent, the disinterested, and noble Nature of your
Lordship,

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Lordship, will easily believe were your prevailing Motive to embrace it. And although You are hereby separated from a Clergy who universally regard you with the greatest Reverence, and, at the same time, with the most hearty Affection, it is easy to foretel, you will meet there another Clergy, who will regard you with the same Sentiments. The greatest Part of These are *now* no Strangers to your Virtues and Accomplishments: And if any are, when They shall come to have some little Experience of those great Abilities and Talents for Government You are happily possessed of, when They observe your Vigilance in the Discharge of your high Office, the Gravity and Dignity of your Person and Behaviour with a due Mixture and Temperament of Affability and Courteousness, your Easiness of Access, your tender Regard to all, and your particular Regard to those

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those of Them who carefully fulfil all the Parts of their Ministry, or distinguish Themselves by any other Merit, when they shall come to see, as they will, all this, and a great deal more, your Lordship, no doubt, will be as much endeared to *Them*, as you are to the Clergy of your late Diocese of *Norwich*; and whenever it shall please God Almighty, in any way, to take You from Them, *They* will be seen to regret the Loss, no less than *We* now do. For my own Part, my Lord, I should have esteemed it a peculiar Happiness to have rested always under your Shadow, your immediate Authority and Inspection. But if that cannot be hoped for, I flatter myself, however, that Your Favour and Kindness will yet be continued to me. — And may God, as well for the Honour and Support of the whole Church of *England*, as for the Comfort and Edification of that

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that Diocese you are now called to govern, be pleased, of his gracious Goodness, yet to extend that Length of Days he has already given you (with perfect Vigour both of Mind and Body, and every kind of Felicity) to the most advanced Period. I am,

MY LORD,

Your Lordship's most dutifull

And most obedient humble Servant,

JOHN WHITE.

that I should you are now called to

govern, be pleased, or his gracious

Goodness, yet that I might

of Days have been given you with

Gifts and Graces, which I have

and every kind of (to the most

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THE Occasion of writing this Letter, 1, 2, 3.

The supposed better Lives of Dissenters a plausible
Prejudice in their Favour, therefore much incul-
cated, to the Disadvantage of the Church of Eng-
land, especially formerly, 4, 5.

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when there is not near so great a Difference, as
there formerly was, between the Lives of Church-
men and Dissenters.

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Interests in the next World, since it is their
Portion to suffer so much in this. Here, it is
shewn that their Complaints of Suffering are
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vate and common Profits of the World, but have
rather the Advantage of Churchmen, in that re-
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sonable

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A
L E T T E R
To a Gentleman Dissenting from the
CHURCH of *ENGLAND*;
CONCERNING
T H E L I V E S
O F
Churchmen and Dissenters.

WHEREIN

The *peculiar Obligations* which Dissenters are supposed to lie under to Holiness of Life, and the *special Advantages* they are pretended to enjoy above the Members of the Church of *England* for promoting that End, are considered, divers great Advantages which the Members of the Church do *really* enjoy above *them* are pointed out, the Lives of both fairly and impartially represented, the Argument (or Prejudice) arising from the better Lives (*real or supposed*) of Dissenters, in favour of their Churches, is discussed, and what Dr. WATTS has advanced upon those Subjects in his Book, entitled, *An humble Attempt towards the Revival of Practical Religion among Christians*, is largely examined.

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THE

TO THE HONORABLE MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

CHURCH OF THE GLAD

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

Churchman and Butler

P R E F A C E.

THE Lives of Churchmen and Dissenters, which are the Subject of the ensuing Letter, have been but rarely, and then only occasionally, touched upon in those Controversial Writings, which from time to time have passed between them. The Dissenters not having, it seems, thought fit to insist much upon those Points in the *Argumentative*, but only in the *Invective* or *Declamatory* Way, the Writers on our Side did not seem to think they had any Occasion to consider them. But, in my Opinion, we should have done it of ourselves. For I am greatly mistaken, if, for one who renounces the

Communion of the Established Church upon any *Scruple* about conforming to the Constitution, the Rites, and Ceremonies thereof, there are not ten who do it merely in pursuance of a Notion they are possessed with of *better Edifying* and *better Living* in their Churches. And if so, the putting their People in a *right way of Thinking*, in regard to those two Points, would help more to weaken, and go farther towards putting an End to the unhappy Schism they are engaged in, than the completest and most unanswerable Vindication of the Constitution, and of all the Forms and Appointments of the Church. The former of these Notions has been often largely considered, and excellently well refuted, particularly in the *London Cases*. The latter I here undertake to consider; no body else, as I before intimated, at least so far as I know, having yet done it
to

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to any purpose. I have been rash enough to take the Occasion, which was given me, to animadvert upon one of their worthiest Ministers and ablest Writers; he having said more upon this Subject than I have met with elsewhere. I have considered the *special Obligations* which he supposes Dissenters under to greater Holiness of Life; and I have made appear, that the *peculiar Advantages*, which he also pretends *they* enjoy, above *the Members of the Church*, towards the same End, are none at all; but, on the contrary, that *we* have many Advantages of that Sort, which are wholly wanting in *their Churches*. I have offered divers Considerations upon the Lives of Churchmen and our Dissenting Brethren, as well Ministers as People; and have shewn, I hope, they have not so much on those Accounts, to boast of, as, I suppose, is commonly apprehended; and

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and what they have is not owing to any peculiar Excellencies and superior Advantages, in their Way, towards nourishing Men up in Goodness, but to Circumstances and Causes of a quite different nature; and that, after all, Religion is to be tried only by the Doctrines and Practices thereof, and not by the Lives of its Professors.

I hope I may be allowed to take the Notice I have of this Gentleman; without offending either *him* or others. He himself observes, in the Book which I am now considering, p. 138. *It may not be improper in some Parts of their Ministrations to enter into the Merits of the Cause, and modestly to give their People the Reasons why they separate from the Public Worship of the Parish.* And then, doubtless, he will allow me modestly to shew that those are no Reasons; especially when this is done,

as

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as I here declare it to be, with no more Intention to maintain a Controversy with *him*, than *he* professes to have to begin one with his Brethren of the Established Church; though I must say, too, when Things so highly, and, at the same time, so injuriously reflecting upon it are advanced, and published to the World, he could not, I think, reasonably expect to escape, and I admire he has hitherto escaped Animadversion from one or other.

A Design of the Nature set forth above, if it were well executed, would, I believe, be thought an essential Service to the Church of *England*. How it has been executed in the following Writing, the ingenuous Reader is to judge. But if it had not been thought that some *small* Service to Religion and the Church of G o d might be expected, or, however, *hoped for* from it,

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it, I should have indulged my Reluctances, and given way to those Reasons which were rising continually in my Mind against making it public, and let it remain with me an *Anecdote* for ever.

A
L E T T E R

CONCERNING

T H E L I V E S

O F

Churchmen and Dissenters, &c.

S I R,

T H E last time we were together, at the House of Mr. G——, our Neighbour and common Friend, in that delightful *Alcove* which commands one of the finest Prospects in the World, being the Anniversary of the Restoration of King *Charles* the Second and the Royal Family, the Conversation, as on such a Day was natural, turned, for a while, upon the *marvellous Footsteps* of divine Providence in that Revolution, and the *happy Effects* of it. In abatement of which, however, one of the Company took notice of that Deluge of Debauchery and Profaneness which *then* broke in upon us. And hereupon, as you doubtless remember, you was pleased to observe, “ that “ the Corruption was not general, but one Part “ of the Nation yet held to their former Strict- “ nefs.” And you farther added, in terms, however, as your way always is, very respectful to the
 B Company,

Company, who were hearty and serious Conformists to the Church of *England*, “that there was
 “ *then*, and has been *ever since*, in the Lives of
 “ the two Parties of Churchmen and Dissenters, a
 “ Difference so visible, and so greatly to the ad-
 “ vantage of the latter, as to be, to you, a mighty
 “ Confirmation in the way of Non-conformity you
 “ was in; since it *must*, and did apparently proceed
 “ from some special Advantages, towards growing
 “ in Grace and Goodness, *you* enjoyed above the
 “ Members of the Church. For you could not
 “ help thinking, *that* was the best Religion which
 “ had the most of those Advantages, and did ac-
 “ cordingly produce the best Fruits.” — And
 you took that occasion to recommend a Book
 written by your very ingenious Friend Dr. *Watts*,
 entitled, *An Attempt towards the Revival of Practi-
 cal Religion among Christians*, wherein this Subject
 (you told us) is largely handled. — You had no
 sooner done, but I perceived the Eyes of the whole
 Company turn upon *me*; not, I suppose, as one
 whom they thought abler than themselves to say
 what was proper to be said, but as one whom it
 would not become, by reason of his Cloth, to be
 wanting, on such an occasion, to vindicate the Ho-
 nour of, and do right to the Church of *England*.
 This drove me from my natural Taciturnity;
 and therefore addressing myself to you — I rea-
 dily acknowledged, that a great Debauchery of
Manners did come in with the *Restoration*, as a
 Debauchery of *Principles* came in with another
Revolution that has since happened, which, never-
 theless, we *then* gratefully received, and think on
now with Pleasure. And if the *Debauchery of that
 Time* did not reach the Non-conformists, it was,
 perhaps, because the *Joy of that Time* did not reach
 them neither. The great and sudden Joy of the
 Royal

Royal Party, for their happy Deliverance from a long and grievous Oppression, made them almost mad, (as the Oppression itself, according to *Solomon's* Observation, had before made them, though in a different way) and pushed them on into many Extravagancies and sinful Follies. But *your* Joy, on that occasion, being so very moderate, we may cease to wonder, that it did not transport *you* into any Excesses, or do much Injury to your Morals. This is all, as I remember, I thought necessary to say upon that Head. — But as to your being confirmed in your present way of Non-conformity by seeing the Difference of Life between Churchman and Dissenter, so much, you said, *to the advantage of the latter*; I took that to be a Matter of greater Moment, and so thought it necessary to enter deeper into it; and did accordingly offer many things, to shew you how false and delusive, how groundless and unreasonable your Satisfaction was. Some of these, if I was not deceived, and that greatly too, stuck with you. And my observing *this* made me, afterwards, that I could not be easy within myself, without doing something more, to lower, and, if possible, to take quite away, that Satisfaction, which, I plainly saw, was so pernicious to you.

To say truth, I was, at first, not a little surprized, to find *you* in *such* a train of Thinking. I could not but admire, how a Gentleman, though not brought up in the Schools of Learning, yet so much improved by Conversation, and by *running to and fro* in the way of Commerce, whereby the Mind is enlarged, and *Knowledge is increased*, and who, since his Retirement to that elegant Seat in the Country, and fine Estate about it, acquired by his Industry and prudent Management, has so much given himself up to Reading: I could not, I say,

4 *A Letter concerning the Lives of*

but wonder, how a Gentleman of *your* Capacity and Understanding could be misled by *such* an Argument into the By-ways of Separation. But when, after a little Reflection, I came to consider you in another light, as one who has a Zeal for God, and an ardent Desire to promote the Interests of Godliness and practical Religion, my wonder presently ceased; and I thought it natural *you* should think well of a Cause which may *seem* to have *some sort* of Connexion with those good Things. This, I plainly perceived, was your Prejudice, (for you must allow me to call it so) a laudable one indeed! if any Prejudice can be laudable; but such, however, as has a little blinded you, and led you already into some erroneous Ways, and, if you have not a care, may lead you into others that are yet more erroneous. It has blinded and misled Thousands before *you*. For, Sir, this is not *your own particular* Prejudice, but is *general and ancient*, and has been carefully *cultivated* among you from the very beginning of the Separation.—— I have read somewhere, that in the Grand Rebellion a certain Officer, in the Service of the Parliament, being taken Prisoner by the Royalists, was by them kindly asked, How it was possible a Gentleman of his Education and Improvements could be engaged in so unrighteous a Cause? To whom he made this Reply; “that he had not, perhaps, “considered the Merits of the Cause so carefully as “he ought to have done; being *prejudiced*, as he “knew many others were, against his Majesty’s “Service, by seeing the loose and disorderly Lives “of many Cavaliers.” And the same poor Prejudice biased many against the Church, in favour of the Sectaries of those Times. The greater Strictness of *these* in certain Points and Duties of Religion was no small Advantage to their Cause: and

and, to give them their due, they were not wanting to make the most of it, by setting themselves forth, Ministers and People, as the *Gens sacra* (so I think *Lewis du Moulin* calls them) holy Men, of whom the World was not worthy (while the Bishops and Clergy were constantly represented as not only *Strangers* to, but even *Haters* and *Deriders* of serious Godliness; and the Laity adhering to them, almost one and all, as an ignorant, worldly, lewd, drunken, blasphemous Crew, a *World lying in Wickedness*. By this well chosen Topic for Declamation, they drew great Numbers after them. Dry Disputations about Church Government, and other Points in Difference between us, few of the People were either disposed or qualified to enter much into. They could not well judge of the Truth or Falshood of Principles and Doctrines; but they could easily distinguish between a sober and a sensual, a strict and a disorderly, a good and a bad Life. And when they had found who they were that led the best *Lives*, they had found, as they thought, who had the best *Religion*. The old Managers of the Dissenting Cause would have been loth, I guess, to offer this Argument to the World in a *strict* and *logical* way; but were willing, 'tis plain, the Multitude, as they did, should run away with it. The Pretence was specious, and not ill suited to those Times, when there confessedly was, among *them*, a greater Strictness in some laudable Practices of Religion, than was, commonly, seen among the Members of the Church; a greater Difference in their Lives, than there *now* appears to be. The present Degeneracy and Corruption of Manners is so great, and so nigh universal, as leaves little room, a Man would think, for either *Harangue* or *Argument* of this Nature. But 'tis a Topic, I

perceive, too popular and captivating, to be easily forsaken; and we see your Writers now and then striving to make something of it. And the *Humble Attempt, &c.* which you so heartily recommended (for your Recommendation, added to that Curiosity I had before to see every thing of that ingenious Gentleman's, set me immediately upon reading it) makes, here and there, some Efforts that way. And though the very *Attempt to revive practical Religion* among Dissenters, whom it is chiefly written for, and more particularly suited to, plainly implies in the Author an Opinion that it is, at present, in a low and languishing State, and ready to die away among them; yet he has taken care to intersperse, up and down, some Intimations, that there is yet such a wide Difference in the Lives of Churchmen and Dissenters, as may well recommend the Religions of the later (any, or all of them, I suppose) to our Choice and Preference.— I shall beg leave to lay before you some Strictures which I have drawn up on those Parts of the Book which have relation to the Subject of our Discourse, particularly, where he asserts, and, at large, maintains, that you are not only under *special Obligations*, but also enjoy divers *peculiar Advantages* above us in Matters of Religion, and towards rising to the highest Degrees of Christian Holiness and Perfection; and then add some farther Considerations, which did not occur to my Thoughts at the time of our late Conversation, in hopes thereby to *finish* your Conviction.

I begin, then, with those *Obligations* which you and other Protestant Dissenters are supposed to be under to a more exemplary Holiness of Life. These, Sir, I do assure you, I am no way inclined to dispute. You shall think, for me, there are as many of them lying upon you, as you please. The more
and

and greater you apprehend them to be, the more likely you will be to comply with them, and to be led thereby to those higher Attainments in Religion to which this worthy Gentleman is conducting you. Yet I cannot but observe, most of the *special Obligations*, which he suggests, are fitter, though I hope they were not intended, to stir up in your Minds a Spirit of bitter Strife and Animosity against the Church and Churchmen, than a Spirit of Holiness and Sanctification among yourselves.

One special Obligation, it seems, to your living holily, that so you may secure your eternal Interests in the *next World*, is taken from its being your Portion to suffer so much in *this*. You are therefore bid — *Awake, awake, my Friends.* — Do you not aim at something glorious and divine, that will counterpoize all the Evils you sustain? *Awake* — and let your Character and Piety brighten upon the World; let your uncontested Virtues shine among Men; let them efface all the Gloom and Darkness that is thrown upon your Names, and overpower the unrighteous Scandal. What? shall we be cast out of all public Offices, Trusts, and Salaries, as Men unworthy of civil Benefits and Honours, and, in many Instances, be retrenched of the more private and common Profits of this World, and yet content ourselves to obtain none of the Treasures, that relate to another World, in the room of them? Shall we bear the Scoffings of our Neighbours, and be derided as Fools and Fanatics? Shall we be reviled as Men of Humour and Hypocrisy, as Deceivers and false Brethren, and content ourselves to bear all these Indignities in the present Life, without gaining any thing by it, with regard to Grace, Righteousness, and Life to come? — But why, I pray, all this unreasonable Ag-

gravation? Why all this *Enthusiasm*? this Vehemence of Expression? this Pomp of Words? Does the Occasion *require* it? or, indeed, will it *bear* it? In my poor Opinion, these are Things fitter to be said to the late *Saltzburgh Emigrants*, than to Protestant Dissenters in *South Britain*. If your Case, Sir, is here rightly represented, you must have a sad time of it. One cannot imagine less, than that some of you are condemned in *heavy Fines* or haled to *Prison*; that others dare not *shew their Heads*, or are *booted thro' the Streets* with Reproach and Obloquy, or *bissed off the Exchange*, and affronted in all public Companies, and private Conversations. But is there any thing like it? There may be perhaps here and there a *pleasant* Fellow who has his *Joke* for you, or a *malapert* one, who shall call you *Fools* or *Fanatics*. But are there none who have their Flings, too, at Churchmen, and for their *Fools* and *Fanatics* return them the Compliments of mere *Formalists*, *angry Bigots*, *fiery Zealots*, *Sons of Violence*, *furious Persecutors*, *Popishly affected*, *Enemies to the present Settlement of the Crown*, *Haters of Godliness and godly Men*, and the like? I doubt there are; and those, too, of a higher Class than such of us as are commonly guilty of the *Petulance*s abovementioned. And yet, I think, I should hardly reckon this a reasonable Topic to argue upon with my Friends of the Established Church; nor call upon them to take care to be happy in the next World, *that so they may counterpoize all the Evils they sustain in this* from the Hands of Dissenters.

I don't believe you, Sir, can ever approve of those invidious Complaints of Persecution and Oppression with which your Writers have filled the World for many Years past. For you can't help
seeing

seeing there is not the least Reason for them, and that they are evidently meant only to serve a Cause. 'Tis a fine thing to have the Credit of being persecuted for Religion, when one feels nothing of it. And besides, when the Notion of such a thing once gets among the blind and undiscerning Multitude, it may help to stir up and mislead their Passions, excite their Pity, and bring in Converts to your Churches. But, methinks, they should have had some Consideration of, and Reverence for others, whose Eyes are more open than those of the Vulgar, yet can't discover the least Colour or Pretence for these heavy Complaints, and plainly see they are altogether groundless. For my own part, I never think of them without thinking of Mons. De Meaux, and his *Pastoral Letters* to the Protestants of France; and whether were the greater, the Assurance of that Frenchman, in telling the Protestants there, in the midst of their Sufferings and Terrors, that they had suffered nothing, that *no Violence had been offered to any one of them, in his Person or Goods, and that they had been so far from enduring Torments, that they had not so much as heard them mentioned*; or the Modesty of these, while, in the full Enjoyment of Ease, Security, and Credit, they complain of Hardships and Oppressions; which of these (I say) were the greater, one is at some loss to determine.

As to your being *retrenched of the more private and common Profits of the World*, I know not well what the Gentleman means. But this I know, that a Dissenter in Trade (as most of you are) may be pretty secure of *all* of the same Way, and has commonly too *his Share* of his Conforming Neighbours (who, I'll say that for them, seldom trouble themselves much where they lay out their Money) for his Customers. And this, I hope, you will allow

allow is no Discouragement to — the Dissention. Were all the Members of the Church to follow their Examples, confining their Dealings to themselves, in the same Manner and Degree your People do, it would make the Meetings a good deal thinner than they are, and be, in fine, *the shortest Way with the Dissenters*. — Excuse me, good Sir, these last Words, which, I am sensible, have had, since the Days of *De Foe*, a disagreeable Sound in the Ears of all honest Men, as well as Dissenters. But I use them not, I declare, like that insidious Wretch, by way of Proposal or Advice to those of our Communion, but merely by way of Reply to this Author's Complaint, that, by being Dissenters, they are great *Losers* as to *the common Profits of the World*. According to all the Observations I can make, they are far enough from being *Losers*, on that account; so far, that, if I had a Son brought up to any Trade, and had no Consideration, either for him or myself, of another World, I should be ready to say to him, at setting up — *My Son, get Money; and, in order to that, be a Dissenter*. — I cannot, indeed, pretend to any *Experience*, or much *Insight* into Matters of *Trade*; but I have Eyes to see, and Ears to hear what passes in the World. However, Sir, I am willing to put the Matter to *You*, and leave it with *your Conscience*, Whether you really think your being Dissenters (taking you one with another) is any Prejudice to you, in the Shop? Or did *You*, in particular, find it any to yourself, upon the *Exchange*? Or do you really believe, you might have raised, by Commerce, a fairer Estate than you have done, in case you had been a Churchman?

The other Grievance (if any Grievance it be) he complains of, that your Friends are shut out from all *Offices, Trusts, Salaries, civil Benefits, and Honours*,

is indeed more manifest. Yet I will engage, as simple as I fit here, it shall be removed, when they will lay down their Enmity to the Church, that is, in short, to one half part of the Constitution. And one would hope, they have not the Conscience to ask it, upon other Terms.

Their being Enemies, I expect you will tell me, to *one* part of the Constitution is not Ground enough for their being excluded from the *other*. Let it be then said, they are Enemies to both; for, certainly, they ought to be so esteemed. Church and State, here in *England*, are so incorporated and united, that they must have, like the married Pair, the same Friends and Enemies, and stand or fall together. And, as whoever is admitted into the Service of *one* has thereby great Opportunities of hurting the *other*, so whoever *actually* ruins *one* will be found *eventually*, if not *intentionally*, to ruin the *other* also. And this is surely Reason enough why the Enemies or Disaffected to *either* should be excluded from *both*. It is upon these Grounds that it is thought reasonable and necessary (and, I dare say, by Dissenters, as well as others) that Nonjuring Clergymen should be excluded from all Promotions in the Church. A Nonjuring *Rector*, *Vicar*, or *Curate* has, to be sure, by Virtue and in the Way of his Office, Means and Opportunities to weaken and undermine the Civil State: and, if he should actually do it, the Church itself, together with the State, would be endangered. *He* therefore is shut out of the Church. Very well. But has not then (for Example) a Dissenting Mayor of a Corporation, by the Influence he has upon the Legislature, (especially as those Gentry *now* order Matters) greater Opportunities to undermine and subvert the Church? In which Case, the Civil State, I doubt, would stand as tottering, as the Church would in the other. And why, then, must
not

not *be* be excluded from the Service of the State? In a word, *common Sense* (if I have any) cries loudly, "Let *both* be excluded, or *both* admitted;" there being no Reason, that is fit to be owned, for excluding or admitting *one*, which will not hold as good for admitting, or excluding the *other*. And, since the *Church* is content to exclude, and lose the Services of many learned and pious Men, who are perfectly well affected to it, for the Safety of the *State* (though for its own too in the Issue) I think the *State* can do no less, in regard to the Safety of the *Church* (and indeed its own, in the Event of Things) than return the Civility by keeping the Enemies of the Church out of *its* Service.

I entreat you, Sir, not to tell me that the Government may greatly suffer by being deprived of the Services of many wise and able Men. For if you will please to look about you, you will see something daily passing to convince you, that there are scarcely half so many Services, many as there are, to be done the Government, as there are *bumble Servants*, Members of the Church of *England*, and of sufficient Abilities to do them; and the letting in a Multitude of Competitors and Expectants more than there are already, might only serve to encrease our Factions, as so many more must be, on course, disappointed of their Desires and Hopes, (which, doubtless they, all, think just and reasonable) and, consequently, grow discontented. Nor let their good Behaviour towards the present Government be pleaded: If they *have* behaved well towards the Government, they have done their Duty, but *they have done no more than was their Duty to do, and are unprofitable* Subjects. Have they stood always firm in their Allegiance, and never been found in any rebellious or seditious Practices? Then, with my consent, no

Pains

Pains and Penalties shall be inflicted on them ; there shall be no Revocation of their *Toleration* ; all their civil and religious Rights shall be preserved to them ; and they shall live among us as securely, as the rest of his Majesty's good Subjects.

Nec furtum feci, nec fugi, si mihi dicat

Servus ; habes pretium, loris non ureris, aio.

Non hominem occidi ; non pasces in cruce corvos.

HORAT. *Epist. Lib. i. Ep. 16.*

As to any eminent and extraordinary Services they have ever rendred either to his present or late Majesty, and their Government, they are not apparent to me. But were they ever so great, even tho' they had *placed* or *kept* the Crown on their Majesties Heads (as, I think, once, by their groundless and imprudent Boasts among their Neighbours^b, *that they had now a King of their own, and should soon have the Churches too, they help'd to shake it*) whatever (I say) their Services to the Government may have been, it would be unreasonable, and *politically absurd* to reward them for 'em, by putting the Church into their Hands, by heaping upon them such Places of Power and Trust in the Government, as might enable them, and we are very sure, from their Principles and Affections, they would not fail to make use of, to overturn it.

As this Writer's Complaint is in itself *unreasonable*, so I would observe, it is somewhat *unreasonably* and *improperly* made in this Place :

Non erat his locus.

It looks a little odd, to find such heavy Com-

^b See Remarks upon the Lord Bishop of *Bangor's* Treatment of the Clergy and Convocation, p. 42. where this Behaviour of theirs is asserted and justly described.

plaints, and these so often repeated, of your being cast out from all *Offices, Salaries, and so forth*, in a Book written purely to *revive Practical Religion* among you. Is it to be thought, the admitting you to *these* would be a *means to revive it*? Quite the contrary. *Practical Religion*, in your last fifty Years of *Ease and Security*, has confessedly and visibly decayed; and there is no doubt but it would decay proportionally more in *another fifty Years of high Trusts, public Offices, and Court Employments*. So that whoever has more the *Religion of Dissenters* than the *Dissenting Interest* at heart, instead of *re-pining* at their being kept out of Civil or Military Employments, would rather *congratulate* them upon it. The Doctor, I perceive, is not thoroughly in the Sentiments of *Joseph*, who, when his Brethren came down into *Ægypt*, instead of placing them, as he might have done, in the *Class of Soldiers or Priests*, plainly told *Pharaoh* they were *Shepherds*, tho' *Shepherds*, he knew, were an *Abomination to the Ægyptians*, and their being such, by the Constitution of the *Ægyptian Government*, made them incapable of Places of Trust, Power, or Profit, and the highest Preferment they could ever have, was being made *Pharaoh's Herdsmen*, and Rulers over his Cattle. He seems to have been afraid that *Pharaoh* would make them Courtiers, or Commanders in the Army, and to have taken this way to prevent it: He wanted to have them a Land appointed them, where they might live separate from the *Ægyptians*, and be at a distance from the King's Court, that so they might more easily keep their Religion *pure and undefiled*. If this Gentleman was not so Self-denying as to wish that his Brethren might be excluded from all Trusts, Salaries, public Offices, and Court Employments, yet he might well have been content, for a Reason like that of *Joseph*, they should

should be *without* them. Had he addressed himself to them in some such Manner as this; "You are, indeed, my Friends, excluded from public Offices and Employments, but *let not your Hearts be troubled*. As Protestant Dissenters, you make an open Profession of great Tenderness of Conscience: But how hard is it, in this our Day, to keep a good Conscience, and not be made *Servants of Corruption*, in public Trusts and Employments; and there are but few, as you have Reason to suspect, that do it. There is a certain Contagion almost inseparably adhering to them. Besides, the Air of a Court, which they will oblige you to frequent, has always been held infectious.—*Exeat aula qui velit esse pius*. It makes the Heart dissolute, causes a strange Dissipation of Thought, and fills the Mind with such a Crowd of vain Images, as leaves little room for Objects of a more important and concerning Nature. So that, far from a Matter of *Complaint*, I look upon it as one of the choicest *Advantages* you enjoy, above the Members of the National Church, of keeping a good Conscience, and growing in Grace and Goodness, that our Rulers have thought fit to lay you under some Disqualifications of this sort."—If, I say, he had spoken to his Friends of public Offices and Honours thus *sightingly*, and made *such an use* of their being excluded from them, I don't think it would have looked amiss, in a Treatise, purposely written to recover Dissenters from the present Corruption that is in the World, to a better Sense of Practical Religion, and more serious Godliness. I appeal to you, Sir, whether it would or not; nay, indeed, to this Gentleman himself, upon farther Consideration.

He

He says, *As you have the Courage to be singular in your Ways and Forms of Separation and Worship, you ought not to be ashamed or afraid to be singularly and eminently virtuous.* — It will be easily granted, you are very singular in your Forms of Worship and Ways of Separation. And, if I may take the liberty to recommend to You, Sir, *one or two Books*, as you have done *one* to me, I could wish you would please to peruse ^cone of Dr. Durel, wherein he has sufficiently shown the *Singularity* of your Forms of Worship; and ^danother of the excellent Mr. Bingham, which has made appear, beyond all Possibility of Reply, that the Grounds and Principles of your Separation from the Church of *England* are also *singular*, and such as would oblige you, were you to hold to them, to separate also from the *French Protestant Churches*, as well as *ours*. And I doubt not but the same might be shewn after the same way in relation to other Churches, not excepting your Sister Church of *Scotland*, which, I humbly conceive, you cannot conform to, without renouncing, at least without laying down on this Side the *Tweed*, to be taken up again at your Return, some of the main Principles which the Separation here in *England* is built upon. But, how singular soever you may be in these things, I don't see that any mighty Degree of Courage is required to make Profession of them. For though you are few, compared with the great Body of the Church of *England*, you are yet *enough to keep one another in Countenance*, and, if we may judge by some of your late high Demands and bold Transactions thereupon (which you, Sir, however, I have heard, would have no

^c Entitled, *A View of the Government and public Worship of God in the Reformed Churches.*

^d *French Churches Apology for the Church of England.*

hand in promoting) to hold up and support one another in a pretty good Degree of Assurance. I would have you consider, it asks a great deal more Courage and holy Fortitude to be *singularly virtuous* in a degenerate Age; and to maintain this Character at every Call of Providence, by asserting the Cause of God in the Company of profane Men, or in the midst of Infidels and Apostates, and withstanding the Solicitations and Importunities of Sinners, when they entice us; by being unawed by the Indifference, the Frowns, or the Threats, and not allured by the Smiles, the Caresses, or the Promises of the Great, to violate one's Duty in any Instance: I say, it requires a great deal more Courage and Resolution to be thus *singularly virtuous* in the midst of a corrupt World, than it does to own one's self, in this Country of almost unlimited Religious Liberty, a *Presbyterian* or *Independent*. How strangely then does this Argument conclude! It is thus: "Since you have, my Friends, that *small Degree* of Courage that may be sufficient to profess yourselves, *here*, Protestant Dissenters, it will be thought, let me tell you, mighty strange, if you should want that *higher Degree* of it, which is requisite to your being *singularly virtuous* in the midst of a wicked World."—This is the Reasoning; and false as it is, and must appear to all who have the least Knowledge of the World, I shall yet be glad if it prevail with any Dissenter to lead a Life more singularly and eminently holy. Only I was loth to let it pass, without taking the Sting out of it.

He tells you, p. 204. *You profess to maintain and vindicate Christian Liberty by your Dissent from the Established Church, and bear up and support the Freedom of Conscience, in opposition to all the Inventions and Impositions of Men.*—As if you had no *Inventions* and *Impositions* of your own! But, at present,

present, let that pass. Let us see, what Use he makes of your having discharged yourselves from the *Impositions* of the Church. Why, he infers from it two things; *the first*, a special Obligation upon you to see to it, that *you turn not your Freedom from the imposed Rules of Men into a Release of your Conscience and Practice from any of the Laws of God.* But, I doubt, it will be found, that the releasing yourselves from the Unity and Communion of the Church, only for enjoining one or two decent and becoming Ceremonies, *is releasing your Conscience and Practice from one of the Laws of God*; he no where, in his holy Word, allowing you to go out from any sound Part of the Catholic Church, on any such account. The other Inference is, that *you impose not your own private Opinion, or particular unscriptural Practices, upon your Neighbours, and particularly, not upon your Brethren of the Established Church.* This is very well, and reasonably inferred from the Premises. But how does he infer from *these* Premises a special Obligation upon *You* to live holier Lives than other People? *That* was the Point in view; but he seems to have quite forgot it; or I rather believe, he did not forget it, but knew not how to *infer* it from *such* Premises as have no manner of Connection with it. He may truly be said to have *taken bold* (as, I think, he some where speaks) *of this Topic*, and to have *seized* it for his Use, though it happens to be of no use to him. I dare say, it did not *offer* itself to *his*, nor would to the Mind of *any other Man*, who should set himself to think about these Matters. 'Tis pretty plain, our *Impositions* are here introduced, not to enforce upon your People a more eminent Holiness of Life, which he saw they were no way fit for; but only to shew them (as he had before observed) it would not be

improper, now and then, to do) “ Some Reason
 “ [such as it is] why they separate from the public
 “ Worship of the Parish.”

You have another Obligation to a strict and holy Life, taken from the Characters of the *old Puritans*. And I am ready to allow there is some Propriety and Pertinency in setting before you their Examples, whose Children and Followers you *pretend* to be: only the following their Examples should not have been urged in the gross, and without proper Distinctions. For some of them were very unruly, disorderly, and seditious Men; while others, 'tis true, had a good Character for their blameless Lives, Strictness in Religion, and for their quiet and peaceable Behaviour; and, I will add, (what I wish, Sir, you would be pleased to consider) for making a Conscience of separating from the Church for every thing they happened to dislike in it. When you follow them in *this*, which is the *main* Thing, as you do in some other of their Sentiments, *they* shall be then called *your* Fathers, and *you* shall be called *their* Children. But till then, I cannot agree to it.

I would also own your *Obligation* supposed to arise from the peculiar *Advantages* in Matters of Religion, you are here pretended to enjoy above the Members of the Church, if I was *satisfied* of those *Advantages*. But indeed I am *not*; and therefore shall farther attend your Author, to let you see, if I can, that you are not possessed of any such *peculiar Advantages* as he supposes you to be.

If all these *Advantages* had been supposed to arise from the *peculiar Circumstances and Situations* of Dissenters, it would hardly have been worth while, nor should I have had any Thought of contesting them. But it is a different Case, when they are said to arise out of the *very Doctrines and Points in*

Controversy between us; for, *then*, the *Church* is interested in the Cause: And much more, when it is pretended, as it is here, that the Doctrines and Institutions of the Church are not only *less profitable and edifying*, not so well fitted for the Improvement of Men in Religion and Increase of Piety among them, but are *positively destructive* of these Things, and *naturally tend* to turn Men away from Holiness of Life. *Then* the Imputation rises higher, and calls loudly for some Animadversion and Reproof.

He begins thus: *You [Dissenters] are not in so much Danger of taking up with the outward Forms of Religion, instead of the inward Power and more spiritual Parts of it, as your Neighbours may be.*—He then instances—*You are in no such Danger of mistaking Baptism for inward and real Regeneration, as those who are educated in the Established Church; to which unhappy and dangerous Mistake the Office of Baptism in the Church of England has been thought to give too much Countenance.*—It matters not much what *has been thought* by some People. Their Thoughts about many Things are so unaccountable, that there is danger of *their* mistaking almost every Thing. And I must wonder a little at your Author, that he should poorly take up with saying, the Office of Baptism *has been thought* to give Countenance to such unhappy and dangerous Mistakes, when he would not himself venture, upon his own Judgment, to fix such a Charge upon it. However, he cites the Places in the Office of Baptism which *have been thought* to give them Countenance; as where the Child is said after its Baptism to be *regenerated, and grafted into the Body of Christ's Church*; and, again, to be *regenerated with God's Holy Spirit*. Will it then be denied, that a baptized Christian is regenerated? Is he not *born again*? And *being born again*, in the figurative Scripture Sense,

Sense, what is it more or less, than being put into a new State? And is not this done to every Christian at his Baptism? Nay, does not the Scripture use the very Term we are speaking of, to express his Entrance by Baptism into this new State? As in those Words of our Saviour to *Nicodemus*, *Except a Man be born of Water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God*; and those of St. Paul, which run parallel with them, *We are saved by the washing of Regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost*. For my part, I am rather of opinion, that we are regenerated *only* in Baptism; and that Scripture and Antiquity so appropriate the Word, as to exclude any Conversion that does not accompany Baptism, from being signified by that Name. The twenty-seventh Article of the Church of England expressly teaches, that *Baptism is the Sign of Regeneration or new Birth*. And the *Directory* itself says the same Thing. For, there, the Minister is ordered to instruct the People at Baptism, *that it is a Seal of the Covenant of Grace; of our ingrafting into Christ, and of our Union with him; of Remission of Sins, Regeneration, Adoption, and Life eternal*. And he is ordered to pray—*that God would join the inward Baptism of his Spirit with the outward Baptism of Water; make this Baptism to the Infant a Seal of Adoption, Remission of Sin, Regeneration, and eternal Life*.—This, I suppose, is true and wholesome Doctrine in the *Directory*; in the *Articles of the Church*, tolerable; but, in its Offices, I perceive, it is false and exceeding dangerous. But how comes this about? How is it, that the same Doctrine, which in the *Directory* and the *Articles* is inoffensive, is so offensive and scandalous in its *Liturgy*? Why, Sir, the Case is plain. The *Directory* these Gentlemen approve; the *Articles* they are forced to subscribe, and therefore *must not be seen* to con-

tradict; but they don't subscribe the *Liturgy*; and so, may be as free with *that* as they please.

But, I suppose, his Quarrel with the Office of Baptism is for its countenancing, or *being thought* to countenance what he calls a *real and inward Regeneration*. But, if he means by *that* the Renovation of Mind and Spirit to real Holiness, by the Operation of the Holy Ghost, at the Time of Baptism, actually *effected and completed*; let him know, the Church of *England* does not assert or countenance, in new born Infants, any such Thing. They are, indeed, declared, after Baptism, to be *regenerated by God's Holy Spirit*; but that *may* only signify their being born again, or put into a new State, by Baptism, which is the *Appointment* of the Spirit. For, you must observe, Sir, the several Offices and Administrations of the Gospel are attributed to the Spirit, and represented as his Ordinances and Appointments. But to say nothing of *this*: There is doubtless in Baptism a real Efficacy *towards* the Renovation of Mind and Life. For, if the Holy Ghost, who is the great Agent in this Work, the Principle of future Newness and Holiness of Life, which will certainly produce, when the Infant is grown up, actual Holiness, provided a wrong Education, evil Habits and Examples, and other Things, do not hinder: If, I say, the Holy Spirit of Grace is given in Baptism (which, I suppose, we have on all Hands agreed it to be) I cannot see why it should be thought an *unwarrantable* and *dangerous*, or so much as an *improper* thing, to pray that the Baptized *may be*, or to declare that he *is* regenerated thereby: As a Field *properly may*, and *is* commonly called Wheat, or any other Grain, though it be *newly* sown, and nothing *is yet*, nor is it certainly known, whether any thing like a Crop *will ever* come up.

I per.

I perceive, the Danger, which your Author apprehends from the Church's asserting Regeneration by Baptism, is this, that, if the Baptized believes he is by Baptism regenerated, he will, of course, believe he shall infallibly be saved. But vain are his Fears! this and every Benefit besides conferred in Baptism being to be lost by a wicked Life; and the Members of the Church being constantly so *taught* and so *believing*, notwithstanding *his* Insinuations of the contrary. You shall have his Words; and then judge what Reason he has for them. *I readily grant*, says he, *that many of the Ministers of the Church and the wiser Christians do know and believe, that there is no such inward Grace and Salvation really communicated by Baptismal Water.* At first reading, perhaps, you will think this a *gracious* and *charitable* Concession. But read it again, consider it, and observe, if you please, the *Implications*? Are they not plainly *these*? That the Ministers of the Church are *divided* in their Opinions about this Matter; that *many*, or, as it should rather seem, *most* of them, and all the Christians that are not of the *wiser* Sort, are of this Belief, *that Grace and Salvation are really communicated by the Baptismal Water.*—Communicated too *by* the Baptismal Water! that is, surely, by some *physical* Causality in the Water; for that, it should seem, is the Opinion he would fasten upon them; whereas they believe, whatever is communicated, is *by* the Holy Spirit, only in the Use of the Water, according to God's Appointment. And then again, *really* communicated! which, one would think, is meant to insinuate, what would have been too daring to assert, that they think them *so* communicated that they can never be lost. And indeed, if he does not mean *that*, what he says is nothing to the purpose. Do, *you*, Sir, now, or let any one else judge, if this Ac-

culation be not *weak*, as well as *groundless*. The Gentleman complains, *the Church has put in no Caution and Guard against this fatal Mistake, which its Members may so easily run into.* I doubt it has many, if Expressions implying the contrary to this Mistake may be called *Guards* and *Cautions* against it. But as to *formal express Cautions* against it, I really think there is no occasion for them. It is indeed proper to give the People frequent Cautions against resting in the outward Performances of Religion, such as Fasting, Praying, and the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper; because many really *are apt to do that.* But few, I believe, or none rest their Hopes of Salvation upon the mere Privilege of their Baptism. And it is a doubt with me, whether this Writer can name, or ever knew in his Life, any one Member of the Church, who seriously believed he should be saved, be his Life what it would, merely because this Sacrament had passed upon him; who had taken up this Belief from the *Offices* of the Church, and made it the Occasion and Encouragement of his persevering in Wickedness of Life.

He goes on, and pushes the Matter yet farther. *The Answer in the Catechism, which Children are taught, does but too much confirm and establish them in this Mistake.* Therein they are taught to say, that in their Baptism they were made Members of Christ, Children of God, and Inheritors of the Kingdom of Heaven. And he supposes their Parents, hearing this, will encourage them to believe, that, the Case being so, they are born again as much as they need be, and shall certainly be saved. I must here, again, make a doubt, and put it to his Conscience, whether he ever knew any Parents who have taught their Children this Lesson. If any have, they must have done it in open contradiction to those
better

better Lessons they and their Children both are constantly taught at Church. They are taught *there*, that these Titles do really denote no more than the common Privileges of professed and baptized Christians; that they do not import any such Change, actually wrought in the Powers of their Souls, and the Course of their Lives, as *You* commonly call Regeneration, or new Birth; and much less imply any Certainty of their Salvation.

As to the first of these Characters or Titles, *viz. a Member of Christ*, the vulgar sort of Dissenters always speak, nay, in truth, this Author himself speaks of him, in the Book I am now considering, p. 41. as one *who is a Saint, in a State of Grace, and renewed to Faith and Holiness; and as made such, not (as some have imagined) by the Water of Baptism, but by the Operation of the Word and Spirit of God on the Heart, and by diligent Attendance on all the appointed Means and Methods of converting Grace.*—But *we* are taught and believe he is only a Member of *Christ's* mystical Body, or the Church, (*for we are all baptized into one Body*) and as a Member of *Christ*, or of his Church, may be, at the same time, (unless *St. Paul* too be unhappily and dangerously mistaken) a *Member of a Harlot*, that is, a notorious and grievous Sinner; so he is never the nearer Heaven for being dignified with this glorious Title.—In like manner, a *Child of God* is a Title always appropriated by Dissenters to the Godly. But it stands for no more in the Catechism than it does in many Places of Scripture, that is, for one who is taken or adopted by Baptism into the Family of God (*for, says St. Paul, ye are all the Children of God by Faith in Christ Jesus.*) But then there are Children of the Kingdom, who for being rebellious shall be cast into utter Darkness. And if they are *Children*, as the Apostle argues,
then

then Heirs. But the Inheritance may be forfeited. Thus, you see, the whole Ground of all this Confusion and Mistake is your accustoming yourselves to the Use of these Phrases either in an *unscriptural* Sense, or in *only one* of the Scripture Senses, the straitest and most limited; while the Catechism uses them in the most extensive one. You apply them to those, and only those, whom you believe to be in a State of Grace and Salvation, which they cannot fall from; and then the Church is presently censured as erroneous, for applying them to all visible, baptized Christians. But the Error is your own; wholly arising from your Misapplication of Scripture Language. And let any one judge, if it be not fitter you should correct your Phraseology, than that the Church should alter her public Forms, which are perfectly agreeable to Scripture Language, to make them accord with it.

You say, the forementioned Titles are too *high* and *august* to be given *indiscriminately* to *all* baptized Christians.—But Mr. Baxter did not think so. For he says in express Words^a, that a *Person professing the Christian Faith, or the Infant of such, is, by Baptism, solemnly entred a visible Member of Christ, and his Church, a pardoned regenerate Child of God, and an Heir of Heaven.* And therefore, *that it is not unfit that the Minister call him so, supposing only, that, in foro Ecclesiæ, he were the due Subject of Baptism.* And the Commissioners at the Savoy Conference, of whom he was one, who peck't at every thing, and made it their Business to find Difficulties where there were none, only proposed, in the Manner of the Expression, some Alteration, as, that the Child should answer, that, in Baptism,

^a *Christian Directory*, p. 690.

he was, not made a Member of Christ, &c. but visibly admitted into the number of the Members of Christ, the Children of God, and the Heirs of the Kingdom of Heaven. An Alteration, as one would think, for Alteration's sake, both evidently meaning the same thing. So that it seems to me, that the Pretence of Danger from teaching Children this Lesson was but a late Thought, suggested, probably, at first, to your Writers, by the affected Dialect of your People, before mentioned, and by their Help become so current and popular among us.

But now, Sir, as to the danger of teaching Children, that have been duly baptized, that the forementioned Titles are really *theirs*, pray consider, that it seemed good to the Holy Ghost to give them those Titles, before we did. And will you presume to say, that the Words, which the Holy Ghost uttered, have a natural Tendency to lead Men into a false Security, to make them rest in external Privileges, and conclude that without Holiness they may be saved? No, Sir: Such high Privileges and Honours conferred on all visible Christians naturally tend, as they were certainly meant, to promote quite other Purposes, and some of them *the very reverse* of these. They tend to exalt the Goodness of God, and the Grace of the Gospel, whereby we are invested with them. They naturally suggest our Duty and Obligation to live so as those Privileges, and Dignities, and such an honourable Relation to God and *Christ* require; and shew us the Danger of living otherwise, as it will render our Fall the more dreadful, and we shall be thereby *thrown down*, and sink deeper into Hell, for being thus *exalted into Heaven*. These are the proper and natural Uses to be made of our being adorned with such Privileges and Honours: And these our People
are

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are constantly taught to make of it. And they are never like to make any other, not to be sure *that* which your Author apprehends; at least, if he and his Brethren, by pretending they *justly may*, do not *shew them the way* to do it.

I see it number'd among your Advantages, that *you are freed from the Inventions of Men and the Incumbrance of human Ceremonies in divine Worship*. Truly, Sir, our People are not much incumber'd with human Ceremonies. For in the ordinary daily Service there is not *one*, *legally* enjoined, unless *Kneeling* at Prayer be a Ceremony; and if it be, I don't see why *standing* should not be accounted such. Be it as it will, the Church surely must have as good a Right to impose *Kneeling* in the public Worship upon her Members, as you and other Dissenters have to *impose* it upon your Children and Servants in your Family Devotions. If *ever* a Ceremony may be used in divine Worship, it should, methinks, rather be in *that* which is *public*, than in *private* Worship. But if you think otherwise, you may, if you please, come to Church, and behave there (as your People commonly do, whenever they do come among us) *with as little Ceremony* as you do at Meeting. And you had much better do so, than live in your present unwarrantable Separation from it.

Two or three of these Ceremonies he desires he may be permitted to mention; by which, one would think, he meant to insinuate, he could have named, if he had pleased, twenty or thirty, but would only decimate them, in his great Clemency. The first of them is *the Sign of the Cross at Baptism*. This, it seems, according to this Gentleman, is a great Incumbrance to our People. But *how* are *they* incumber'd with it? None but the Minister has any concern in it; and he, I fancy, neither
finds

finds nor thinks it to be any Incumbrance at all. But I wonder most at his way of talking, as if it were your peculiar Happiness, for which you are to bless yourselves, that you have not *had that Figure made upon your Foreheads, nor* (as he is pleased to express himself) *passed under it.* Why, Sir, do you think it would have done you any harm, if you had? Had it been your fortune to have received your Baptism at Church, and *passed there under the Figure of the Cross,* do you conceive it would have made you a worse Christian? And if not, with what Reason are these Questions put to the Consciences of your People?—*Do you remember a crucified Saviour, and let him dwell upon your Thoughts more than they do who make use of it? Are you more courageous and manful in the Profession of the Gospel, in a dangerous Hour? Are you less ashamed to confess the Faith of Christ crucified?*—Is this, Sir, reasonably expected? Could not he be content with your being *as* mindful of a crucified Saviour, *as* courageous in confessing the Gospel, but you must be *more* so? And was it not enough, if you were *as* little ashamed to confess the Faith of *Christ* crucified, but you must be *less* ashamed of it? The putting these Questions to your Consciences plainly supposes the Sign of the Cross to be *operative*, to have a bad Influence and Effect upon the future Life, an invisible Power to make one *afraid* to profess the Faith of *Christ* crucified, *unmindful* of his Cross, or *ashamed* of it. So that, instead of making it a Sacrament, or a Means whereby we receive the Grace of God, which we are groundlessly charged with doing, *he* makes it (if I may call it so) an *Anti-sacrament*, or a Means whereby we are *deprived* of that Grace. In doing of which *he* is guilty of as great and unwarrantable Presumption, as we *should* have been in doing of the other, having no more

Authority

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Authority to make a Sign of human Invention a means to *stop and obstruct*, than we have to make it a means to *convey* divine Grace.

The next Ceremony (as he calls it, though, surely, not with his usual Correctness) is the *Institution of Godfathers and Godmothers*. And a Man would wonder which way this Institution is any *hindrance* to a holy and godly Life. Can you, Sir, I desire to know, imagine *how*? One would really think, if they did no *good*, they could not, possibly, do any *harm*; and that, if they did nothing, as we were growing up, towards *leading us on the Ways of God*, they would not, however, *turn us away* from them.

Indeed, he tells you, *You are ready to imagine that the Promises of these Sureties arise so high, as to give Parents too much Indulgence and Excuse for their own personal Neglect of the Instruction of the Child*. Where, again, I cannot but admire his Discretion. For, as he had said before, the Office of Baptism *has been thought* to give countenance to a certain Error, while he would not, himself, say it does; so now, instead of saying, the Promises of the Sureties *do* rise so high, he only says, *You are ready to imagine* that they do. And yet this Expression, wary as it is, is so contrived as to beget in the Reader's Mind a Belief that the thing *is* so, as much as if he had positively asserted it. But in regard to the Matter spoken of; whoever *imagines* that the Promises of the Sureties rise so high as to give the Parents any Indulgence or Excuse for neglecting the Education of the Child, is greatly mistaken; and of this you will be satisfied, if you will only please to give yourself the trouble to read over the Office of Public Baptism. You will be so far from finding these Promises *rise so high* as is here pretended, that, I do assure you,

you, you will find no Promises or Stipulations at all made by the Sureties, concerning the Child's Instruction and Education, I mean, none that are formal and explicit. They do indeed receive from the Minister an Exhortation or Charge concerning its Christian Education; and by standing there to receive it, they are *justly supposed* to accept it. But this Charge or Promise (if you will call it so) does not *run so high* as to give the Parents any sort of Pretence for neglecting their Duty of bringing up their Child in the Fear of God. It does not bring upon the Sureties the Trouble and Expence of its Education, any more than of its Maintenance; but only lays them under an Obligation *to see, that it be taught what a solemn Vow, Promise, and Profession it had made by them; to call upon it to hear Sermons, to learn the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments, and all other things which a Christian ought to know and believe to his Soul's Health.* They are to see that the Infant be taught the Nature and Obligation of its baptismal Covenant; that is, to have the *Overight* of those who are to teach it. When one employs another to see that some particular Work be done as it ought to be, as when he appoints a Trustee to his Will, to see that it be duly executed, no body supposes this to mean, that the Party so entrusted was to execute the Will himself, but only to *superwise* those who are to do it. In like Manner, the Charge delivered to the Sureties, and their Obligation to see that the Child be taught, is to be understood as only importing an Obligation upon them to take a general *Overight* of the Christian Part of its Education, to stir up the Parents, if there be need, to provide it for them; to admonish them, if they neglect it; and to take themselves, all *fitting* Opportunities to put the Child in mind of its own Duty. Is this the Way

for

for Parents *to get discharged* from their Obligations to instruct their own Children? May they neglect their Instruction, because they have provided Sureties who are to admonish and reprove them for such Neglect? I fancy, no Parent is so weak as to reason after this Manner.—I have, in my Time, dealt with many Churchmen for not bringing up their Children in a better Way, yet never in all my Life met with one who pleaded this in excuse for his Neglect, either in Jest or Earnest. No, Sir; every body knows, the Church does not mean, by appointing Sureties, to take off from the Parents any part of *their* Duty, but only to supply their *Negligences* and *Defects*, and make up in some Measure what may be wanting in *their* Care. And is not the Church, do you think, more secure of the religious Education of its young Members, by such a Provision, than if the Matter was left to the Consciences only of the Parents, some of whom, you know, are extremely *ignorant* of the Christian Religion, some *heretical* in their Opinions, and others vicious in their Lives, and so *cannot* teach them, or will teach them *wrong*, or *not think at all about teaching them* the Ways of God.

There is little doubt, but the Case of Children of very *ignorant*, very *vicious*, or *heretical* Parents coming to Baptism, often happens among Dissenters, as well as in the Church. When such Cases happen among *you*, I desire to know what *is to be done*, what commonly *is done*. Are such Children to be baptized without any Promises or Stipulations at all for their Christian Education? Or, are they to be baptized upon the Stipulations of *such* Parents, which you own, nay, contend, are not fit to be taken by the Church? Or, must they remain unbaptized, till they come to Years of Discretion, when they can answer for themselves, or 'till their

Parents think fit to sue for their Baptism in the Church? This indeed is sometimes done, to my certain Knowledge; and even *now*, the *very Day* I am writing this, I have a Case of this Sort brought before *me*. Surely, in these Cases, it is much better they should be brought to Baptism upon the Promises and Stipulations of some serious Persons, such as the Church requires those who undertake this Office should be. In other Things, we can easily see the Advantage of *double* Securities: And, I fancy, Sir, if your Lawyer, or whoever else has the Disposition of your Money, should lend it to every one that *wants*, or *has a Mind* to borrow it, rejecting, *as not proper*, all other Securities besides his own, and then go about to make a *Merit* with you of his so doing, you would either think he was a very *wrong-headed* Man, or that he took *you* to be *such*, and find it high Time to put your Affairs into other Hands.

Since we are upon the Subject of the Sureties Promises in behalf of the Child, I shall beg Leave to point out another of your gross Mistakes, or Mis-representations, touching that Matter, though it happens, that the Doctor has given me here no Occasion to take Notice of it. For, as you commonly suppose they undertake for the Instruction and Education of the Child, so you seem generally to *imagine*, they undertake also for its future Life and Practice. Not only the common Sort of Dissenters, but indeed those who might have known better*, even some of your greatest and ablest Writers

* Thus the Answerer to the Friendly Debate, p. 116. and Mr. Peirce, *Vindication of Dissenters*, Part 3. c. 6. plainly suppose, that the Sureties or Sponsors do undertake for the Sincerity of the Child's Faith, and its future Integrity of Life, *which none*, (says the latter) *without great Rashness, can promise for another, and especially for Infants.* And even Dr. Doddridge (Third Letter

ters are possessed with that Notion. And 'tis one of their heaviest Charges against the Church, that it obliges Godfathers and Godmothers to make such Promises in behalf of the Infant, as neither they, nor any Man living, can ever be sure it will perform. And when they are desired to shew us any such Promises, we are referred to the Sureties Answers to the baptismal Interrogatories, made by *them* in the Child's Name. These Answers seem to be grossly mistaken for so many Promises made by the Sureties, in their *own* Names, concerning the future Faith and Practice of the Child, as if they undertook thereby, that, when it is grown up, it actually *shall* believe all the Articles of the *Christian* Faith, that it *shall* renounce the Devil, and all his Works, and *shall* also obediently keep God's Commandments; whereas the Church considers these Answers as the Answers of the Child, only made by its Representatives. They contain *its* Part of the baptismal Covenant, which, because by reason of its tender Age, it cannot, itself, utter, is to be uttered by its Sureties. And that this is so, you may plainly see by the Address which the Minister directs to the Godfathers and Godmothers, immediately before the Interrogatories, where he says to them, *This Infant must faithfully, for his Part, promise by you that are his Sureties (until he come of Age to take it upon himself) that he will renounce, &c.* And the Priest's Exhortation to the Sureties, after Baptism begins thus—*Forasmuch as this Child has promised by you his Sureties to renounce the Devil, &c.* And that, in this Affair, the Sureties are considered by the Church no otherwise than as the Mouth of the Child, is yet plainer

ter to the Author of *Christianity not founded on Argument*, p. 55.) seems to have the same Notion of this Matter.

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from the third Question, and the Answer thereto—*Wilt Thou be baptized in this Faith? That (say the Sureties in the Name of the Child) is my Desire.* 'Tis evident from the subject Matter of the Question, this is the Child's Answer; and so are all the rest. And accordingly, in the Baptism of such as are of riper Years, and able to answer for themselves, the Priest addresses *the Persons themselves* who are to be baptized—*Ye must faithfully, for your Part, promise, in the Presence of these your Witnesses, and this whole Congregation, that ye will renounce, &c.* And then he demands of the Person to be baptized, or of each of the Persons to be baptized, severally, the baptismal Questions, which they, in their own Persons, return Answers to. You see, Sir, here are no Promises or Engagements which any, besides the Child, enter into, and are bound by: And I wonder how any of you can, if you really do mistake, in so plain a Case.

The other Ceremony he mentions, which you, it seems, are happily freed from, *is kneeling at the Lord's Supper.* And of this he goes on talking just in the way he had done before of the Cross at Baptism, and some other Matters, demanding of those, “who scruple and renounce that Posture, “that they be *more* penitent and self-abased under “the Sense of their Sins, *more* thankful for the “condescending Love of Jesus, and that they “adore God and the Saviour with a *warmer* Zeal, “and *more* contrite Spirit, than those that practise “it.” Another, who might be disposed to cavil, and take all Advantages, would hardly fail to lay hold of so fair a Handle as this Gentleman has here given, to charge him with *Quietism*: For, surely, these Passages have an Air of it; the very Essence thereof consisting in some *high Acts of Contemplation or Adoration*, without any outward Expression of them,

them, which (say your *Quietists*) is very hurtful to them, and ought to be avoided and removed, that it may not hinder them. But, for my part, I don't think he had any Intention to recommend or countenance that pernicious Doctrine; and do verily believe he meant *nothing worse*, than *discrediting* the Church, by making your manner of receiving the Sacrament (as he seems resolved to make *every thing else*, let it be what it will, wherein you differ from us) a just Ground for demanding of your People greater Devotion in the use of it. But is not this Demand a little extravagant? *The more inward Devotion, the less of it you outwardly express, and the shyer you are of shewing it!* Is not this quite *unnatural*, and therefore *unreasonable* to expect? Whoever considers Nature, would rather expect to find a greater degree of inward Devotion, where he observes, in the Gestures of the Body, a greater outward Appearance of it; not only, because the devout Gestures of the Body *naturally do*, and therefore *probably will* excite and stir up in the Mind something of Devotion, where there was none before, and heighten it where it was; but also, because where-ever there is in the Mind and Heart a great degree of it, it will naturally shew itself in devout and reverential Gestures, and is not kept from it, without some difficulty.

Another of your Advantages, according to this Author, is, *You are not confined to set Forms of Prayer, and a perpetual Repetition of them, in your public Worship, which are apt* (he says) *to introduce into Devotion, Formality, Coldness, and Indifferency of Spirit;* and he brings, as Witnesses of this Truth, some of yourselves, who, after attending divine Service at Church, have much complained that their Hearts are apt to grow dull, negligent, and drowsy, under this uniform and constant Rehearsal of the same
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returning Forms and Phrases. This being told as a Matter of Fact, I shall not dispute the Truth of it, and shall only tell you of another Fact, which is as true, that some of *us*, having been at divine Worship among *you*, have been as drowsy over a long, uniform, continued Prayer, though it was quite new; or have been kept wakeful by mere *Indignation* and *Disdain*, at the Meanness, the vain Repetitions, the weak and wandring Thoughts, to say nothing worse of it. As to those who complained of their growing dull and negligent in divine Service at Church, I cannot but wonder at them, because the *Forms and Phrases* of our Prayers must be, to *them*, pretty new, whatever they are to *our own* People; as new, I doubt, as *the Forms and Phrases* of those Prayers, which they hear in their own Assemblies. Therefore, I think, it cannot be, that the Coldness and Indifferency of their Spirits should be owing to the *continual Repetition* of them; but it must be owing to another Cause; and that I suspect to be some *Aversion* they had before-hand conceived to them. Were they not taught, from their Infancy, both to *despise* and *bate* them? And if so, what wonder if they were *negligent* at them? Did they go to them with any real Design to *join* in them, and *offer them up* to God as their *own*, and not rather with an obstinate and sullen Resolution to have *no Part and Concern* in them? And if *this* were the Case, well might Drowsiness creep upon them. I fancy, Sir, if you were to make the Experiment but a while, you would find them otherwise affecting, than these People (it seems) did. The reading of the Scriptures, which makes a considerable Part of the Church Service, would be, I presume, no Weariness to *you*. And if the Prayers, the Psalms of *David*, the *Te Deum*, and other Hymns, and the Ten Commandments, solemnly pro-

nounced, which God spake from the top of Mount Sinai, *with Thunders, and Lightnings, and the Voice of the Trumpet, exceeding loud, so that all the People in the Camp trembled*; if these (I say) should rock you asleep, I seriously profess, I should wonder at you. Let me intreat you, then, to make the trial; and if you do, I desire, as I justly may, you will comply with my Request in two things; one is, that you divest yourself of any *unreasonable Prejudice*, if there be any, you may have entertained against the Liturgy; the other, that you be *conformable* to the Rules of it, and behave as other devout Men and Women do. Make your humble Confession to Almighty God, and offer up the Prayers, *meekly kneeling upon your Knees*. Add your hearty *Amen* to each of them. Lift up your Heart, and raise your Voice in the alternate reading the Psalms of David. There is no pious and devout Person among us, I dare venture to say, but has experienced the Fitness of reading them so, to raise Devotion, and can truly say,

—oft th'alternate Chant

Of sacred Song wakens my highest Raptures.

Join, with an audible Voice too, in all the *Responses*, which, though some of the ruder Sort among you have, in their way, ridiculed, are highly approved and commended by* one of the greatest of your own Writers, who rightly observes, that *the Use of the Tongue keeps awake the Mind, and stirs up God's Graces in his Servants; and that it was the Decay of Zeal in the People that first shut out the Responses*. These Responses, I am satisfied, alienate the Minds of many of your People from the Liturgy, as much, or, perhaps, more, than any thing else in it. The *Noise and Babbling* of them (as they are wont to call

* Baxter's *Christ, Direct.* p. 856, and *Cure of Ch. Divis.* p. 188.

it) is, it seems, very uncouth and offensive to them. And if a Quaker were to come into *your* Meetings, the *Noise and Bawling* (as he, doubtless, would call it) of your *Psalmody*, would be as offensive to *him*. The reason of both is plain; neither *he*, nor *you*, have any thing like those things, in that way of Worship you were brought up in, and have been always accusom'd to. But if you would only resolve to shake off the Prejudices of Education, and disengage your Minds from that Power and Force, which Custom has upon 'em; if you would come to our Churches, and *prevail with yourselves* to bring your Common Prayer Books along with you, and, when you are there, help to make, yourselves, some Part of the *Noise* of these *Responses*, you would certainly find it no *Offence*, but a *Pleasure* to you; and I assure myself, the whole Service of the Church would appear to you otherwise affecting, than, possibly, you now think it to be.

If you still think the Variation of the Phrase is such a *mighty* Matter, let us try it, if you please, in one or two Instances. We, in the Confession of our Sins to Almighty God, constantly say, *We have offended against thy holy Laws: You*, perhaps, say at one time, *We have despised thy Commandments*; at another time, *We have committed Iniquity*; and, at a third, *We have done amiss, and dealt very wickedly. We sue for Pardon and Restoration to the Divine Favour*, saying, *Restore thou them that are penitent: You*, it may be, say now, *Forgive us all our Sins, which we truly and sincerely repent of. Then, We confess our Wickedness, and are sorry for our Sin, do thou forgive it*; and the next time, perhaps, use other Words of the same Import, returning, after a proper time, to the first Expressions; which I take to be one of the great Secrets of *Extempore* Prayer. Is it now possible for *you* to think, that

the Attention of any *serious* Man will depend upon his using, *constantly*, one of those Forms, or *interchangeably*, the other? If it be so, it is a Sign he is not much *wearied with the Burthen of his Sins*, nor very solicitously concerned about the Forgiveness of them.

You will ask, perhaps, if I should not, *myself*, be weary of a Sermon, though it were ever so good, *a hundred times repeated*? To be sure, Sir, I should; but then, the Cases are widely different: I should be weary of a *Sermon* so often repeated, because, being stale, I should be no longer *entertained* with it; or, because, having so often heard it, it would *teach* me nothing now, but what it had *taught* me long, and many times, *before*: But, when I go to Prayers, I do not propose to myself *Entertainment*, or *Information and Instruction*, as your People, generally, seem to do: They seem to regard a Prayer with *the same sort of Attention* they do a Sermon, and they expect from the *one* the *same sort of Instruction* or *Entertainment* that they look for from the *other*; which the perpetual Repetition of the same Prayer not affording, they are disgusted at it, and naturally fall into a drowsy Inattention to it: Whereas, if they would lay aside all Expectation of having their Judgments *informed*, or their Imaginations *entertained and diverted* by the Prayers of the Church, and look for nothing in them, besides a Representation of the real Wants and Desires of a Christian to Almighty God, in proper and suitable Expressions, the frequent rehearsal of them would not be such a Weariness, and they would join in them with great Devotion and Delight.

I am pretty sure I have not injured them, by supposing they apply themselves to a Prayer as they do to a Sermon, and expect the same sort of Edification from it. Some I have known, who have
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frankly confessed as much, that *they* go not to Church to pray; *that*, said they, is the Minister's Business, and *ours* is to *mind* him, and *listen attentively* to him: And if any Man, of tolerable Discernment, will but attend your Meetings, observe the Countenances, and mark the Behaviour of the devoutest among you, he will plainly perceive, they are no otherwise employed in time of Prayer, than in Sermon-time; except, perhaps, that, once in a while, he may discover in them some Emotion, or some short transient Aspiration unto God, when any particular Matter, or Expression, impresses their Minds more than ordinarily. On the other hand, you shall observe the devoutest Members of the Church upon their Knees, with uplifted Hands and Eyes, presenting, vocally or mentally, before God, every Petition (stale as this Author supposes it to be) as properly, and as ardently also, as the Minister himself, his Soul hanging, if I may so speak, continually upon God, as the Souls and Eyes of the People do, in your Assemblies, in time of Prayer, upon the Lips of the Minister. This is the Difference between *your* Devotion and *ours*, and this the boasted *Advantage* you have above us, by not being confined to the perpetual Repetition of a set Form of Words.

I don't pretend to deny but there is a Sort of Attention which is better secured by free, than by well known Forms of Prayer, I mean, a close Application of the Mind to the Matter, or the Language of the Prayer; for Example, canvassing, examining, exercising the Judgment about the Fitness of it, watching for new Matter, or curious Expression, striving to retain and lay them up in your Memories, that you may afterwards review, or, perhaps, use them: but *this sort* of Attention I would not have secured, because it is evidently a

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Hindrance to *another sort of Attention*, which alone one would desire to secure, *to wit*, a close Application of the Mind *to praying*. For while the entire Attention of the Mind is taken up, and the whole Force of it spent and wasted in these curious Disquisitions, Enquiries, and Speculations [concerning the Matter or Phraseology of the Prayer, there will be no room for any such Act or Operation of it as Praying is, no Possibility of speaking the Prayer to God, of personally offering up to, and presenting before him the several Requests and Supplications of it. And as to Devotion, that is neither promoted by *all* free Prayer, nor hindered by *all* Forms. You must be sensible, Sir, and I think you must know from your own Experience, there are *some free Prayers* which will cause an Indifferency and Coldness of Spirit, if nothing worse, at *first* hearing. And I can assure you, if you know it not already, there are *some Forms*, which one may use without *Indifferency and Coldness*, and indeed with a *lively Emotion of Spirit, all one's Life long*. In the *antient Forms* of the Church, and therefore in *ours*, which are mostly antient, there is a Strength, an Energy, a Savour, an Unction, I know not what to call it, not to be found in the Composition of modern Prayers, not even those (begging the Pardon of the Composers) which are premeditated, and drawn up with Deliberation, and much less of others that are unpremeditated and extemporary: For Instance, the *Te Deum* of St. *Ambrose*, which we, you know have received into our *Liturgy*. For my own Part, I am not yet, after more than the thousandth time of using it, tired with it; and now, when I rehearse it in the Church, am otherwise elevated and affected with the noble Simplicity thereof, than, I am fully persuaded, I ever should be with the most trim, polite, or spirited Orations of your popular and admired

mired Ministers, and much less with the *flatter* or *coarser* ones of many others. I may also instance in divers other Parts of our daily Service, and in the whole of the Communion Office, which some of yourselves have allowed to be admirable, and I will venture to say none can use, though he had used it before ever so often, with any Formality or Deadness of Spirit, unless he has a Heart so frozen, and utterly estranged from all Devotion, as to be incapable of being wrought up to it, by any means whatever.

If it were, Sir, in the Nature of a Form, as such, to cause a Coldness and Indifferency in the Use of it, *all* Forms, those of Divine as well as of human Composition, and therefore the Lord's Prayer, would have that Effect. But will you presume to fix *that* Imputation upon it? Or do you find, by your own Experience, it is liable to, and deserves it? When your Ministers use that Prayer, concluding their own with it (as some of them do) do you perceive your *Attention* begin to *slacken*, your *Devotion* to *abate*, and *Formality* to creep upon you, as soon as he enters upon it? I hope not. Indeed, I knew a Dissenter, who, as soon as he perceived the Minister was concluding his own, and coming to the Lord's Prayer, was observed to be always feeling in his Pockets for his Pen, Ink, and Paper, and getting them ready to take down the Text and Sermon in Short-Hand-Writing. But this was a *voluntary* Coldness and Lukewarmness towards it, a *forced Disrespect* to it, for Example, I suppose, to the rest, a *mere Affectation*, and, I think I may take the Liberty to say, a very unbecoming one. Don't you think, Sir, that if his Prejudices against the use of the Lord's Prayer, as a Prayer, had not hindered, he might have *attended* to the End of it, with the same *Devotion* he did to the End of that

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of the Minister? Or do you think that he or you could not *now* read, or hear, or use other Scriptural Prayers and Confessions of Sin, such as that of *David* for his own Sin, and the Sin of his People, with the same *Attention* and *Devotion* you *once* could, when you had not read or heard it so often, as you now have? And when other Scriptures are read in your Meetings, as sometimes, I suppose they are, are they the less attended to, or are they heard with the less Devotion, by yourself, or others, for your having been conversant therein from your Youth, and now become familiarly acquainted with them? Or are those Portions of Scripture with which you are less acquainted, more regarded, and reverently heard, and apt to affect you more, than such Parts of it as are intimately and thoroughly known to you? And do you also find yourself, or are your Congregations generally observed to be more fervent and devout at the Prayers, than at the Psalmody of the Church? I fancy, Sir, you will own, there is as great an *Appearance* of Devotion in *this*, as in *that* Part of your Worship, and indeed greater, notwithstanding *this* is carried on by well known Forms, such as the People, generally, are, before-hand, acquainted with. And if your Ministers found or thought it otherwise, surely they would provide, as they easily might, against that Inconvenience. It might easily be done, by making a vast Collection of Psalms and Hymns, which should be in their own keeping, and giving them out to be sung every Lord's Day, or every time of your assembling, taking Care, however, that no one of them should come over again oftener than once in some Years, when it may be presumed to be quite forgotten, and appear to the Congregation as new, as if it had been conceived that Morning. But as your
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Ministers seem to have no thought of using this, or any other Expedient for preventing Indifferency and Formality in Singing, it may be fairly concluded they are not aware of any such Danger, and have no Apprehension that *the continual treading one constant Road of Sentences, or Track of Expressions* has, in Psalmody, any considerable Aptness to *make your Spirits cold and flat, formal and indifferent in your Devotion.* And if they think it has not, in Psalmody, I can see no reason why they should think it has, in Prayer. Then again, I perceive they have no general Exception to precomposed Forms in secret, or Family Devotion, nor yet in Prayer, or Grace, as we call it, before, or after Meat, but do, themselves, I presume, when they sit down to eat, generally use one and the same Form, or with little Variation of Expression, though they are very sensible, that Prayer and Thanksgiving, on these Occasions, is much apter to run into Formality, and to be performed with a Slightness and Indifferency of Spirit, than on any other whatsoever. And this mighty Zeal against Forms, in behalf of free and conceived Prayer, in the Pulpit, while they are so indifferent about them, on some other Occasions, where there is greater Danger of Indifferency and Lukewarmness, would make one think, or, at least, suspect, it is not so much for *increasing the Devotion as the Numbers of their People, for making a Display of their Gifts, and so drawing Disciples after them.*

Nor does it appear to me there is more Reason in that other Pretence, that the several Dispensations of God's Providence, the various Changes and Alterations in the Affairs of a Nation, or of a Person, requiring suitable Petitions and Acknowledgments, cannot be well provided for in prescribed Compositions, but only in free Prayer. For these may be easily

easily foreknown, and proper Prayers or Thanksgivings provided for them, as is done, tolerably well, in our Liturgy; and in extraordinary Conjunctions, special Forms may be composed on Purpose, as is also done, occasionally, as you very well know, by the Archbishops and Bishops of our Church. And as to particular Persons, their Infirmities and Sorrows, whether of Mind or Body, and their grateful Acknowledgments of Relief and Comfort received under each of them, may be suited by proper Forms, or remembered under large and general Expressions. You think, I suppose, this is not enough, but that the Particularities of each one's Case should be represented, display'd, and spread before God, and the Congregation. But, Sir, there's no Occasion for it; and sometimes when it has been done, it had been much better let alone. Stories go about of special Cases having been particularized and explicated in such a manner, as has been justly esteem'd ridiculous, and very offensive to the Congregation. And such is the scantling of some People's Judgment and Discretion, that they may be easily believed. This, however is certain, that set Forms may be so framed as to comport much better with extraordinary Cases and Occasions, than free Prayer can with common and ordinary ones. A precomposed Form may comprehend a vast Variety of Matter, and all the common Wants and Desires of a Christian may be collected and taken into it, which is impossible to be done in an extemporary and unpremeditated Prayer; for that will contain nothing but what comes into the Man's Heart, or Head, during the Time of Praying. And if we suppose he premeditates, and forecasts in his Mind the whole Matter of his Prayer, and means to take in *all Things that be requisite and necessary as well for the Body as the Soul*, he will be apt to forget

get many things when he comes to be engaged in the Duty. And, accordingly, I doubt most of your Prayers are very barren of Matter, compared with the Fulness of our Liturgy. We pray therein for all Kinds of Blessings, and deprecate all Sorts of Evil, spiritual and temporal: We pray for *Peace, Unity, and Concord to all Nations*: We pray for our own Church and Nation, for the King's Majesty, that he may be richly and plenteously endued with all *Heavenly Gifts*, that he may live long in *Health and Wealth*, overcome all his *Enemies*, govern his own Subjects quietly and godly, and finally attain everlasting *Felicity* for himself: For his Royal Issue we also pray, that they too may be endued with *Heavenly Grace*, prospered here with all *Happiness*, and come hereafter to the *Kingdom of God*: For the High Court of Parliament, that all their *Consultations* may be as well prospered as directed to the *Advancement of God's Glory*, and the *Welfare of the Kingdom*; for all in Authority, that they may use the Power that is committed to them for the *ministring of Justice* indifferently and impartially, and for the *Maintenance of Virtue and true Religion*: For the Church universal, beseeching God that he would rule and govern it in the right Way, and continually inspire it with the Spirit both of *Truth and Concord*, and that all who name the Name of Christ may agree in the *Truth of his holy Word*, and live together in holy *Love and godly Unity*: For the Bishops and all the Clergy, that God would pour continually upon them his *Grace and Blessing*, and illuminate them with true *Knowledge*, that in their *Doctrine* his true and lively Word may be set forth, and exhibited, accordingly, in their own *Conversations*. We pray that all the *Crafts and Subtleties* both of wicked Men and Devils against the Church of God, may be dispersed and brought to nought, that, being
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hurt by no Persecutions, we may be evermore at Liberty to serve him in it. We intercede with God that he would have Mercy upon all Men, that he would keep and preserve all who are exposed to Danger whether by Land or Water, the Woman labouring with Child, the Sick, the Prisoner, the Captive, the Orphan, and the Widow, and that he would succour all under their several Necessities, Desolations, and Oppressions. We plead also for our Enemies, for those who persecute us, and speak Evil of us, that God would forgive them their past Wickedness, and turn their Hearts from it, for the future: For those who stand and manfully resist the Assaults, the Crafts, and Temptations of the Devil, that they may be yet more strengthened; for the weak-hearted, and feeble-minded, who have been sometimes foiled, and are growing faint with the Combat, that they may be comforted and supported; and for the actually fallen, that they may be raised again, and all of us tread down Satan under our Feet. We make, too, our Supplications in behalf of those who have wilfully and obstinately erred, and those also, Sir, who with pure Intentions, like your own, have been deceived, that God would give them Repentance to the Acknowledgment of the Truth, and bring them back into the Way of it. In regard to Temporals, we pray, as we are taught to do, for our daily Bread, for the Preservation of the Fruits of the Earth, that in due Time we may enjoy them. We pray, that we may be defended in all the Assaults of our Enemies, that we may not run, in the Day, into any kind of Danger, and be delivered from the Perils of the Night; and that we may also be delivered from all Sedition, Conspiracy, and Rebellion, and from those fearful Calamities of Pestilence and Famine, Battle and Murder, with which God often visits a sinful People, and which we have too righteously

ously deserved. In reference to *Spirituals*, we never assemble without making an humble Confession of all our Sins, those of Omission as well as of Commission, beseeching God, to *have Mercy* upon us, to *spare us*, and *restore us*, and to *give us true Repentance*, that we may live hereafter a *godly, righteous, and sober Life*, to his *Glory*. We pray that we may not be led into *Temptation*, and have *Strength* to resist it, that we may be *delivered from all Blindness and Hardness of Heart*, and from that *Contempt of God's Holy Word and Commandments*, which is now so prevalent and fashionable among us. We pray to be *delivered from Heresy and Schism*; from those *Spiritual Sins* of *Envy, Hatred, Malice, Uncharitableness, Vain-glory of Temper, Pride of Mind*, and *Hypocrisy of Heart*; and from the *fleshy ones* of *Fornication, Uncleanliness, Lasciviousness*, and all other Sins of the more deadly Sort, which *they who do shall not inherit the Kingdom of God*; and from those also which most easily beset us in the *Time of our Tribulation*, as well as in the *Time of our Prosperity and Wealth*. And that we may be preserved from all these Sins, and enabled to *amend our Lives according to God's Holy Word*, we beg of him to *grant us his Holy Spirit*, and to *cleanse our Hearts by its Inspiration*, to give us *Peace of Conscience which the World cannot give*, to give us *Grace and Increase of Grace*, to give us *Hearts both to love and dread him*, and to *incline them to keep each Law of the Ten Commandments*. In regard to *Eternal Things*, we pray him to *deliver us in the Hour of Death*, and in the *Day of Judgment*, and to *grant us, in the World to come, Life everlasting*. In regard to the *common Supplications* we have been making unto him, we beseech him to *fulfil the Desires and Petitions of his Servants*, and in regard to the Word read or preach'd, we also

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humbly beseech him to give us Grace that we may bear it meekly, receive it with pure Affection and due Reverence, and bring forth the Fruits of the Spirit. Nor do we ever fail to bless and praise him for our Creation, Preservation, and all the Blessing of this Life, for the Redemption of the World by our Lord Jesus Christ, for the Means of Grace, and for the Hopes of Glory.—These Things, which I have thrown together with little Order and Connexion, omitting many others which it would have been almost endless to recount, you will grant, I suppose, to be fit Matter for the common Prayers and Supplications of the Church; and I now, Sir, put it to you, if you have ever found so great a Variety of Matter in any one of *your* ordinary Prayers. I doubt, some half a Dozen, or very few more, of these Particulars, set off with a Multiplicity of Words, and, perhaps, some—Repetitions, will be sufficient Matter for one of *your* Prayers. And indeed, I must say, it behoves your Ministers to be as sparing as they can of the Matter of their Prayers, that they may not be always Praying for the *same Things*. For a *constant Round* of the *same Things*, may be, 'tis like, as tiresome and disgusting to *their Audiences*, and cause as much Coldness in *their Spirits*, as as a *constant Round* of the *same Phrases and Expressions*.

It is one of your Pleas in favour of extemporary, or conceived, Prayers, that the various Changes in National Affairs, as well as in those of private Persons, can be provided for, with suitable Petitions, in *them* only, and not in set and prescribed Forms. This Pretence I took Notice of, and have answered *above*; and you must give me leave to observe *now*, that it may be, at some Times, and on certain Occasions, more justly urged *against* those Prayers, than, on any Occasion, *in behalf* of them. Our Liturgy,

turgy, Sir, is never in a Passion with the Impugners of it, or any other Adversaries of our Church, or the particular Adversaries and Enemies of the officiating Minister, nor will suffer him to mix his private Passions and Resentments with his Prayers. But where Men are at Liberty to pray in what Manner they please, they will be apt (some of them at least) and easily may, insinuate into their Prayers their own secret Grudges, or Party Quarrels. And let it not be said, this is never done; your Ministers are wiser and better Men than this comes to. For, in the late Times of Rebellion it was *much* done. It was *then* very *common* among them to vent their Fury and Party-Rage in their *Prayers*, as well as their *Sermons*, bitterly to inviegh against the *Church* and *Monarchy*, and the *Friends* of them, and sometimes against each other. This unbecoming Practice may be justly expected to be frequent in Times of public Distraction; and, at *all* Times (such are the Passions and Indiscretions of some Men!) when their Minds are vehemently agitated, disturbed, and provoked against either private or public Enemies. During the late Disputes among your Ministers about subscribing one of our Articles, and one of the Answers in the Assembly's Catechism, concerning the Doctrine of the Trinity, it was also done, unless ^b one of your Ministers wrongs his Brethren. You (meaning some of the Subscribers) *have often* (says he) *made it your Business* — *to tell Tales to God Almighty against us, and make the bitterest Complaints to him, as if you thought him such a one as yourselves, and hoped to raise his Resentments against your Brethren to as high a Pitch as you have raised your own.* And, indeed,

^a See Edwards's *Gangrena*, Part I. p. 40.

^b See Mr. Simon Brown's Letter to Mr. Thomas Reynolds.

this Practice is so indecent and shameful in itself, and so pernicious in its Consequences and Effects, that the Imposition of set Forms might be well esteemed reasonable and prudent, if it were only for the preventing or restraining it.

I must beg, Sir, your Leave that I may briefly take Notice of one Thing more, and I desire it the rather, because I am not aware it has yet been observed by any of our Writers. You must be sensible that in all our larger Congregations, more especially those in Town, as well of Non-Conformists as Conformists, there must be many at a considerable Distance from the officiating Minister, and almost *out of hearing*; and what for *Coughing, Hawking, and Spitting within Doors*, and Noises from *without*, it will be impossible for these to go along with the Minister, in any Form that is *new* to them, and still less, if he happens to have a weak and low Voice, as many of your Ministers, and some, Sir, of your own Friends, as I am informed, have: and the same may be said of others, who are nearer the Minister, if their Hearing be, in any degree, by Age or Disease impaired; but a very imperfect Hearing will serve both one and t'other to join with him in any Form they are well acquainted with, and have almost by heart. Nay, Sir, one who is quite deaf, by means of certain Helps that may be had, may, tolerably well, accompany the Minister in the Use of our Liturgy. You know, Sir, this is the Case of a *Lady not far from you*; and I have sometimes observed with a Mixture of Pity and Pleasure, how, by *the Help of her Bible, and Common-Prayer Book*, by observing the *Motions and Gestures* of the Congregation, and the *Lips* of the Minister, she has gone along with him throughout the whole Service, and have been told, she is very rarely thrown out, and when she is, soon recovers herself, and comes

comes up again with the Congregation. Now, Sir, I pray tell me, what should she do at one of your Meetings, where she could have no other Benefit from *your Prayers*, than she has now (poor Lady) from *our Sermons*? You must needs confess all these People are *fairly ours*; and you ought to resign them to us. Nay, you are obliged, and that in pursuance of your own Principle, to tell them as plainly as you do some others whom you have less Reason to tell so, that *they ought to go thither where they can most profit*; and that is certainly at Church; even supposing your Ministers endowed with the Gift and Grace of Prayer in a supreme Degree, and to be the ablest Teachers in the World, and their own Parish Ministers the most meanly furnished with all Pastoral Abilities and Accomplishments.

But, before I leave the Subject, I would desire to observe two Things; and they are both suggested by your Author. He ^a elsewhere recommends, in some Cases, Forms of Prayer for private or Family-Devotion, supposing they may be used *there*, without Deadness and Formality of Spirit. And, if *there*, why not, I ask, *in the Church*? Then, he confesses, that an Aversion to Forms of Prayer is the Occasion of much Neglect of Family-Prayer^b. There are many, who, being bred up in the Hatred of all Forms, and not knowing how to pray without them, have gone on, to the End of their Lives, without Prayer, or any Appearance of Religion, in their Houses, which they would not otherwise have done.

You have the Choice of your own Ministers: You are not confined to sit under such Teachers as some

^a *Guide to Prayer*, p. 155: *Humble Attempt*, p. 226.

^b *Ibid.*

rich Patron shall provide for you. Why, are they like to be the worse for being provided by a *rich Patron*? I hope not; and am ready to think *you*, Sir, if *you* were Patron of a Church, would provide for it as well as you would have done, if you had not been Master of *one* of those *many* thousands you possess. But, perhaps, the Word *rich* came in here unawares, without any Design to set a *Mark* upon the *Rich*, as ill Patrons. I will suppose it to be so; and that the Grievance meant is no more than their being provided by a *single* Patron, and the People's being obliged to sit under those whom he has provided to be set over them. But, to my Apprehension, it is much at one, if they are forced to sit under such as *two or three*, or (suppose) *half a dozen* of the *richest* Members of the Church, and *principal Contributors*, shall provided, and bring in upon them: Which, I believe, is commonly the Case, especially in Country Places, a few leading Men, on any Vacancy, looking out for a fit Person to be their new Minister, the rest, generally, acquiescing, much as they do in the Parishes.

But, as you have a Power to choose, so you have to dismiss your Ministers. Yet, I have heard of some, who did not care to accept their Call, upon that footing, and wanted Security for quiet and peaceable Possession, a certain Term of Years. But these Gentlemen, it is like, did not see the Inconsistency of *this* with the avowed Principle of the Separation, that the People have a Right, of which they cannot be deprived, both to chuse, and *dismiss* their Ministers, at pleasure. I should be also glad to be informed, how they reconcile this Principle with their Church Covenant. This Covenant, I thought, had obliged them, Minister and People, to walk together in all the special Ordinances of the Gospel,
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in such manner, as that it should be held, afterwards, unlawful for them to leave their Place, and forsake his Ministry, without being regularly dismissed by him. And, if so, what is become of their unalienable Right to *choose* and *dismiss* their Pastors? And yet, as inconsistent as these Things seem to be, it is ten to one, but one of these covenanting Pastors, if he were writing a Book to set forth his *Plain Reasons for Dissenting from the Church of England, or counting up the Advantages you enjoy, above us, towards your better Edification, and greater Increase in Piety*; I say, it is a great Chance, if he did not tell you of your being allowed to choose, and dismiss again, your Ministers, as one of the choicest of those Advantages, which you should bless yourselves, and be thankful to God for.

Your Author says, *You can dismiss your Ministers, if they be scandalously immoral.* And cannot we too? Is there no Way provided in the Church to get rid of *such*? And, till that is done, or, if it be *never* done, cannot any Parishioner leave his Church, and go to another, which is, in effect, dismissing him? And, if this be done in a modest and peaceable manner, without Noise and Clamour, and a schismatical Spirit, no body is like to *blame* him much, or go about to *hinder* him. You can dismiss them too, *If they be known to fall into dangerous Errors, and will publish them, in opposition to the common Sentiments of the People.* That was very prudently put in: For what if the whole People are of the same Sentiments? What if he has corrupted them, or the *leading Men* among them, and has brought them over to his own wicked Errors? Will they dismiss him *then*? Or has any body else, by the Constitution of your Churches, Power and Authority to part them? If they *will*

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keep him, and pay him, pray, who can *binder* it? Who can remove him, in spite of the People, and put a worthier in his Place, who will teach them the Truth, bring them back from their perverse and dangerous Wanderings, and put them in the right Way to Salvation? And, as to their Dismissing him *for his being thought not so profitable to their Edification*, as they, I suppose, could wish, or he formerly, perhaps, had been; it is a thing seldom heard of. If he be *Orthodox*, as they call *Orthodoxy*, and, withal, a *quiet* and *inoffensive* Man, they commonly jog on together for Life, though he be thought to grow a little *dull*, and *less edifying*, every Day. Good-nature, Friendship, a Regard to his Family, and other Considerations of the like sort do, generally, keep them from dismissing him. But what if it happens, that the Congregation is *divided* about *keeping* or *dismissing* him; that the *ruling Part* think *well* of his public Ministrations, and are for *keeping* him, while the *great Majority*, all of the meaner sort, think otherwise of them, and would have him be dismissed, which, if we consider the various Tastes and Humours of Men, is like to be frequently the Case? If these should think of setting up for themselves, and choosing one who is more to their liking, they would be thought to *walk disorderly*, and be infallibly charged with the heinous Sin of making Schisms and Divisions in the Church; of which we have known divers Instances; one, particularly, at *Exeter*, in the Case of the late Mr. *Pierce*. And if, notwithstanding *that*, they should be still of the mind to do it, they might not have Ability to provide him a sufficient Maintenance. Content, therefore, they *must* be, and cannot help themselves, as the Members of the Church, in that Case, easily may. If they fancy *not* the Preaching of their Parish Minister, there are, in
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most Places, many conformable Clergymen, whom they may like better, very near. And, though running from their own to other Parishes, under Pretence of better Instruction, is not a thing one can *approve* of, or would *encourage*, yet it is commonly *indulged*; and if any one *will* take the Liberty to do it, he *may*, and we cannot help it: Whereas a Dissenter, here in the Country, if he likes not his own Pastor, has commonly no other, at least of the same Denomination, whom he can constantly hear, and join himself to, without intolerable Inconvenience. And as to many, who have neither the Ability, nor the Convenience for travelling many Miles, on the Lord's Day, the thing is quite impracticable.

That we may not be always upon the *Defensive*, I must desire leave to observe, that your Ministers, by being so much, as to their Maintenance and Dismission, in the Power of the People, are under Temptations often, it is to be feared, too strong to let them go on, without Reproof, in wrong and perverse Ways, to indulge them in their Errors, and flatter them in their Vices. In this respect, it will be granted, I hope, the *Advantage* is fairly on *our* Side.

After your Author had said what he thought proper about the Privilege, of choosing your own Ministers, he takes Occasion to display, as the great Advantage of that privilege, the Excellencies of their Preaching, by marking it with three or four Characters, which he seems to think very *distinguishing* ones, and, in a manner, *peculiar* to Dissenters.

They frequently insist upon the peculiar Themes of Christianity, and Divine Revelation. As if no body else did so! when it is notorious, this is what the Bishops earnestly recommend to their Clergy, and what

what they generally, practise, not only in compliance with their Lordships Directions, but from their own Judgments, as a thing fit in itself, and highly necessary in these Times.

The peculiar Themes of Christianity and divine Revelation are the following, at least, the following are some of them; the Doctrine of Original Sin or the dismal Consequences of the Fall of *Adam* upon his Posterity; the Necessity of a Redeemer; the miraculous Conception and wonderful Birth of our Redeemer, his admirable Life, his amazing Miracles, his Death and Passion, and Satisfaction thereby, his Resurrection and Ascension into Heaven, and sitting there at the Right-hand of God, to make Intercession for us; the Dignity and Excellency, the End and Design of all his Offices, and the Benefits we receive therefrom; Salvation through him alone; his sending the Holy Ghost on the Day of Pentecost on his Apostles; the Inspiration and Perfection of the Holy Scriptures; the Doctrine of the Trinity, or the Divinity of the Son and Holy Ghost; the Reality and Necessity of divine Assistances; the Nature, the Unity, and the Perpetuity of the Catholic Church, and the Communion of Saints in it; the Nature and Duty of Faith, and the Privileges of the Faithful; the Nature and End of the Two Sacraments, and the Duty of observing them; the Doctrine of Repentance and Forgiveness of Sins; and, in regard to the Things appertaining to the next Life, which have been brought to light through the Gospel, the Resurrection of the body, the Coming of our Lord *Jesus Christ* to Judgment, and the Life everlasting. These, I think, are the chief of those Doctrines that are more eminently Christian; but, upon what Grounds any Gentleman can pretend to say, or insinuate, that the Preaching of *these* is the Character, in any peculiar Degree, of
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your Ministers, I can't readily conceive. A Difference between *our* Preaching and *yours*, in regard of *these* Doctrines, if it lies only in some smaller Degree of more or less, cannot be easily discerned; and if it could, it would not be a sufficient Ground for such a distinguished Preference of your Preaching as is here intimated to be due to it. Nothing but a *general* and *notorious* Neglect on our Side, can justify such a Preference. And how does it appear there is such a Neglect on our Side? No one, I suppose, has taken the Trouble to get Intelligence of what is preached, on any one Sunday in the Year, in all our Churches and Meetings. And if any Judgment were to be made of *this*, by the Sermons we have in Print, we should be very willing to abide by it. For my own Part I can see no Reason for your Preachers assuming to themselves this Character, as peculiarly belonging to *them*, though I have carefully read *many* of their Sermons, and lightly skimm'd over *more*. I am sure, of those that have been published by our Divines, there is scarcely a Volume, wherein divers of the *peculiar Themes of Christianity* before mentioned are not only *touch'd* upon, but *professedly* handled. And one Way how it comes to be so is *this*. The *Fasts* and *Festivals* of the Church lead *our* Clergy, and, indeed, lay them under a Kind of Necessity of Preaching upon the great Articles and Mysteries of our holy Religion, once a Year. But those solemn Seasons being quite disregarded in *your* Churches, *your* Ministers are neither *obliged* nor *led* to discourse upon, and, for what I know, may think it improper, offensive, and scandalous to meddle with *those* Subjects at *such* Times, as it would have an Appearance of *observing Days, and Months, and Times, and Years*, against the Principles and Custom of your Churches; and hold it best to let them

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alone till some *other* Time, which, as is usual in such Cases, may happen to be *no* Time. And if those Mysteries *are* treated of, at any time, in *your* Sermons, yet as *your* Ministers are never led by any *particular* Call, or *special* Occasion, to those Subjects, it is most like to be done only incidentally, in a slight and superficial Manner. And I cannot but esteem it one considerable Benefit and Advantage, among divers others, of our keeping the *Fasts* and *Fasts* of the Church, which you have discarded, that *our* People are hereby secured of having the grand Mysteries of our holy Faith more largely explained, more solidly proved, more frequently inculcated and enforced upon them.

But they not only instruct the Head, they strike the Heart in a powerful and affecting manner. We have no Exception, I assure him, to this Way of Preaching; but when the Preacher has thoroughly *convinced the Reason*, and *captivated the Judgments* of his Audience, by clear Evidence and Demonstration of the *Truth* and *Weight* of what he delivers, we would have him go on to move and warm their Affections. But as the former Character of Preaching is certainly the more excellent of the two, and that wherein a Deficiency can least be dispensed with, so *that*, I believe, will be allowed by all competent and impartial Judges, to be more peculiarly and eminently the Character of our Preachers, than the *other* is of *yours*. The Generality of both one and t'other have not, I fear, all the Talents (for they are many) that are requisite *to strike the Heart in the most powerful Manner*, and in any degree of Perfection. The Passions and Affections (this Writer knows) are tender and touchy things, and must be approached with all the Address and Delicacy imaginable. You may possibly move the grosser Part of an Audience by an affected Tone,
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loud Vociferations, violent Agitations of the Body, and by bursting out upon them in a Torrent of Exclamation, though ever so improper and unseasonable. But in others, a little more refined, you will raise no Passion besides Indignation and Disdain, to see your Vanity and Folly, in going about to make yourself Master of their Passions by such ridiculous Ways.

Again, *It is the Excellency of their Ministry, that it leads People to a sense of their Degeneracy and Ruin by the Fall of Adam; that it teaches them more the Weakness and Impotence of Nature, and the Necessity of Divine Grace.* The Doctrine of the Corruption of Nature by the Fall, and the Necessity of the Grace of God, is as much the Doctrine of the Church, and her Clergy, as of Dissenters. And this our Author knows to be so. So that, it is like, he means, they carry them *not so far* as Dissenters do; which may be, generally, true, and they never the worse Guides for that. For he is not, on course, the best, who lays human Nature lowest: There is Danger in *depressing* it too low, as well as in *exalting* it too high. And it will be found, upon thorough Examination, that the established Clergy have well avoided *both* Extremes, and taught the *Necessity of God's Grace*, upon the firmest and soundest Principles.

But *experimental Preaching*, I perceive, is their top Excellence. ^a This he describes by *preaching upon spiritual and inward Subjects, such as the first Awakenings of the Conscience of a Sinner, the Fears of the Wrath of God, which sometimes accompany such Awakenings, the Temptations diverting the Mind from them, the Conflicts of the Spirit in these Seasons, the Cases of the Afflicted, and the Tempted, of those that grow in the things of God, and those that backslide, and decline from those degrees of Piety* which

^a *Humble Attempt*, p. 44, 171.

which they once professed and practised, the false Peace of Presumption, and the Torments of Despair, the Terrors of a wounded, with the Serenities and Consolations of an assured Conscience, the Workings of in-dwelling Sin, the manifold Disguises which it conceals itself under, and the subtile Excuses framed by the Flesh for the Indulgence of it, the way and manner of Regeneration, or new Birth. It no way appears, that they preach more upon these Subjects than we do. And this Author himself, in the midst of all his glorying in this their way of experimental Preaching, cannot help discovering some Consciousness of their want of it. It was (he says) *the Fashion and Practice of their Fathers among the Puritans, and hopes it is the present Mode of preaching among them;* but does not venture to affirm it to be so. And indeed how could he, when he knew, and, in another place, had plainly confessed the contrary? In his Dedication of one Volume of his Sermons on various Subjects, chiefly the inward and spiritual Parts of Godliness, he observes, that Treatises on these Subjects are seldom published now-a-days, and therefore he suffered them to take up a larger Share in those Discourses; and he did it with Design to rescue those Arguments from the Charge of Enthusiasm, and to put them in such a Light, as might shew their perfect Consistence with common Sense and Reason. Afterwards, he observes, agreeably to what I had just now quoted from him, out of the Book we are at present considering, that *their Fathers, indeed, talked much of pious Experience, and have left their Writings of the same Strain behind them;* but, he adds, that he mourned to think that some are grown so degenerate in our Days, as to join their Names, and their Works together, in a common Jest, and to ridicule the sacred Matter of their Sermons. He must mean the present Dissenters,

ers, or the Opposition between *them* and *their Fathers* is destroyed. So that, you see, he talks in *another Strain* of their Preaching and Writing, when *another Nail* was to be driven.

But, it may be, though they enter not *more* into these Subjects, they may be *better qualified*, by their larger Experiences, to enter into them, when they do. I answer: Were they so well *qualified* for it, they would hardly *ridicule* it, as this Author complains they do. And, which way they should come to be *qualified* for it so much better, and have *larger Experiences* in these Cases than other Folks, I cannot imagine. They have not been observed, that I know of, to be *more* tempted, *more* afflicted, *more* in Circumstances of Despair or Presumption, and so forth, than other Men. Of that there is not the least Appearance. And if any have been, or be now, in *some* of the Circumstances above described, they cannot well be in *many*, they cannot possibly be in *all*, or *near* all. For a good Part of these Cases are diametrically *opposite* to one another. Mr. Whitfield, indeed, assures us, *he has undergone a Series of Temptations, and continual Buffetings of the Devil, which have, in a high Degree, qualified him for the Ministerial Office, in that he has experimentally tried all things, and, having suffered every sort of Temptation, can suit his Advice to the different States and Conditions of other People's Souls.* He belike, young as he is, never preached any thing but what he has experimentally felt himself. But I have not heard that dissenting Ministers pretend, yet, to any such thing. — After all, I must do this Author the Justice to own, he does not directly, and in Terms, say, *this is*, but only talks of it *as if it* was the general Mode of their Preaching. *You expect, you love, you delight,* (says he to the People) *in such sort of Preaching.* That they may do, and yet

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yet not *have* it. Yes, perhaps, you will say, if they *like* it, they shall *have* it, because their Preachers are of their own *choosing*. Sir, it does not follow; for, possibly, your Elections of Ministers (like other Elections) may often be carried by Management and Intrigue, or swayed by *Interest*, by special *Friendships*, by *Relation* and *Alliance*, and other Considerations of a like Nature. And if some of your largest and richest Congregations have it in their Power to have such as they *like*, such as they think the *best* and *ablest* among your Ministers, the rest will be obliged to choose such as *offer themselves*, or such as they can *persuade* to accept their Call, and come and help them, whether they preach thus *christianly*, thus *pathetically*, thus *experimentally*, or not.

He says, *greater Care is taken among you about the Admission to the Lord's Table, and excluding the Vicious from it.* He confesses, that, by the Rules of the Church, scandalous Sinners are not allowed to come to it: Only he says, *These Rules are not observed, and put in Practice, in all Places, as they ought to be.* Well, be it so, that some notorious Offenders, *Schismaticks*, for instance, who ought, by the Canons of the Church, to be rejected, have been, sometimes, admitted to Communion: Is it not true too, that some (and that by the Rules of your Churches, or however by the avowed Principles of your Ministers) are, among *you*, excluded, who ought to have been admitted to it. It is held by many among *you*, that the Sacrament is for none but such as can give a particular Account of their Conversion, and of the Work of Grace upon their Souls: by which means, not only open and scandalous Offenders, but many who are not wicked, yet in a State of spiritual Weakness and Imperfection, are kept off from an Ordinance, which would be the Food

Food and Nourishment, the strengthening and refreshing of their Souls.

Lastly, it is numbered among your Advantages, that *your whole Conduct is strictly observed, and your Behaviour watched with a narrow and severe Eye, by many of your Neighbours of the established Church, and especially (he says) by those that hate you.* But this Advantage is not peculiar to Dissenters. Whatever it is, Churchmen enjoy it as well as you; for *their Conduct and Behaviour is also observed, and severely watched by their dissenting Neighbours, especially those that hate them.* They cannot, he says, *step awry, but Censure and Reproach attend them.* And if they are guilty of any heinous Crime and Scandal, *the whole Profession and Party of Dissenters are loaded with it; a Circumstance no way pleasing, however a profitable one, as it is a Spur to Duty, a Guard and Restraint upon their whole Behaviour.* Possibly, it may be so, when any eminent Dissenter, who makes a Profession of *Strictness* in Religion, does things that are much amiss. And so, I can assure him, if any eminently *strict* and *zealous* Churchman does the same, the Church shall be loaded with his Crime, and it will be said, and often has been, on that Occasion, *These are the Friends, these are the Ornaments of the Church of England!* and may it not, then, be supposed, this will be a Spur to, a Guard, and Restraint upon *them*? But as to the common Herd, on one side or the other, I don't see but they may do as they please, without any mighty Matter being made of it, or much said against their respective Churches. And, if it were otherwise, it is not likely, that Consideration would have any weight with *them*, or be any Check to *their* Appetites. It will be a Check to none, besides eminent Professors; and it will be an *equal* Check to those, of both sides. And, indeed,

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I am somewhat of Opinion, our unhappy Dissentions have made both *them* and *us* a little more circumspect in our Conduct than we might otherwise have been. This Advantage, I am ready to think, we *do* reap from our religious Dissentions. An Advantage however dearly bought, at the Expence of Truth, and Peace, and Charity, the Welfare of our Country, and the Honour of our common Christianity. And now, Sir, I take my leave of your Author's Reasonings about the *special Obligations* you are supposed to lie under, and the *superior Advantages* you are pretended to enjoy above *us* of the established Church, towards your Increase in Piety, and speeding your Way to Heaven.—If it be thought, as very probably it may, (and, truly, I begin to flatter myself, it appears, by this time, Sir, to *you*) that this Author is a little too *visionary*, in reckoning such things for *mighty* Advantages, which no Mortal besides can see to be *any at all*, and that he has not argued upon these Heads, as one would have expected a Writer who so well understands, as he certainly does, the *right Use of Reason*, should do; it ought to be remembred, this is no more than what happened to the famous *Grotius*, to Sir *Thomas More*, and happens every Day to the greatest Men, when they take upon them to defend any favourite Notion, or inveterate Prejudice they have been bred up in, or have, afterwards, unwarily entertained. On such Occasions, they often fall infinitely beneath themselves, and write in a Manner that discredits the great Abilities God has given them. Many excellent Talents this Writer is certainly possessed of; and it is much to be wished, he had wholly employed them on other Subjects, on which he could not have failed both to *please* and *profit* us.

Having

Having now given you my Thoughts concerning those *special Advantages* which you suppose yourselves to enjoy above *us*, in order to a good and holy Life, and shewn, that you really have no Advantage in any of those Particulars, and that, in some of them, the Advantage is evidently and greatly on our side; let me entreat you, Sir, in my turn, to consider some things I shall take the liberty to suggest to you, which I humbly apprehend to *be* great Advantages peculiar to *us*, and almost, if not entirely, wanting in your Churches.

You need not be told, Sir, (I dare say) that Christian Faith is the only true Foundation of Christian Holiness. Now, in our Church, we have some Provision, and that one of the most effectual, both for the *teaching* and *preserving* the Christian Faith entire and uncorrupt, which is not in yours; I mean the Use of the Three Creeds in the public Worship. By this means the great and capital Points of Belief are rendred familiar to our People, and they come to have in their Minds a regular Scheme of it. And if *you* are taught, now and then, some of these Articles, from the Pulpit, I fear there are others, which you hear little or nothing of. Nor is it only a proper means to make them readily remember, and easily understand their Faith, but also a powerful means to keep them in it, in opposition to Heresies and false Doctrines that corrupt it. For, surely, they will be the more confirmed in it by seeing the whole Church, many of them better instructed, and more knowing than themselves, concurring in the open Profession of it. And if any have unhappily swerved from it, they are hereby distinguished, and made manifest, especially if they be Ministers, who cannot rehearse the Creeds, if they do

not believe *every* Article thereof. So that if one of these happens to be heretical, or is fallen into any Error contrary to the Faith, he must quit his Station in the Church to one who is sounder in it, or else expose himself, by an open and odious Prevarication, to such Abhorrence in the Hearts of all Men, as will keep him from being able to spread much Infection among others. I own, your Ministers do subscribe to all the Creeds, in subscribing to the Articles, and (what I would more particularly point out to *your* Observation) the *Athanasian* Creed, as well as the other; which let them reconcile, as they can, with those *free Censures* some of them pass upon it. However, we find, in fact, by some few Instances in our own Church, that *subscribing in private* is *one* thing, and *rehearsing them publickly*, before the Church, is *another*; those who can do, without any difficulty, the former, strangely boggling at the latter. And, I am ready to think, that, if the open Confession of your Faith, in the Words of these Creeds, had been as much a necessary Part of your Worship as it is of ours, the Doctrine of *Arius* would not have been so rise among your *London* Ministers, and many too in the Country, as it appeared, some Years ago, to be. And, therefore, I hope, these Formularies of our Faith will never be detached from our Liturgy, how long and loud soever Heretics or Latitudinarians call for it.

I desire, Sir, to be excused while I relate to you, out of my Lord *Clarendon*, a pleasant Accident relating to this Subject, which fell out at the Treaty of *Uxbridge*. The Commissioners being all together at the Fire-side, entertaining themselves with general and casual Discourse, one of the King's Commissioners asked one of the other side, with whom
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he had Familiarity, in a low Voice, *Why there was not, in their whole Directory, any mention at all of the Creed, or the Ten Commandments, and so little of the Lord's Prayer.* Which my good Lord of Pembroke over-hearing, he answered aloud, that he and many others were very sorry they had been left out, that the putting them in had taken up many Hours Debate in the House of Commons, and that at last the leaving them out had been carried by eight or nine Voices; and so, they did not think fit to insist upon the Addition of them in the House of Peers; but many were afterwards troubled at it; and he verily believed, if it were to do again, they should carry it for inserting them all. Which made many smile (as well it might) to hear that the Creed and Ten Commandments had been put to the Question, and rejected. And there is little doubt, but the throwing out the Creeds from the publick Worship was one Inlet to those monstrous and execrable Heresies, which, at that time, grew up among us, as the removal of the Episcopal Government was certainly another. And it is not unlikely that Cromwell himself had something of this in his Thoughts, when he would often say, *That there was much of Good in the Order of Bishops, if the Dress were but scowered off.*

From these means for preserving the Purity of the Faith pass we on to others for promoting Holiness of Life. I scorn, Sir, to name the Cross at Baptism, or any human Ceremony in our Church; though I think too, I have as much Reason to make that a Promoter, as your Author has to make it a Hinderer of Holiness. And yet, I must say, when it is used at the Baptism of an adult Person, I cannot see why it may not be supposed to make some Impression upon his Mind, to stir it up to certain holy Purposes and Resolutions; as, particularly, a Resolution

not to be *ashamed to profess the Faith of Christ crucified*.—In the primitive Church, Sir, it was a common Case, that newly baptized Persons were hurried immediately to their Martyrdoms. Now, is it not reasonable to think, that the *Lord's Signet* (as it was then called) which they had just before demanded, and devoutly received upon their Foreheads, might have some Influence upon them, to make them *ashamed* of falling away from the Faith of *Christ*, to *strengthen* them (I mean, Sir, in a natural Way) against their approaching Sufferings, to make them *valiant for the Truth*, and *faithful unto Death*? As our Minds and Affections, in this present State, are apt to be strongly impressed and influenced by the Power of Sense and Imagination, such an affecting Ceremony, at such a time, might have, perhaps, a greater Effect than a serious Exhortation.—But of these Matters you may think as you please; for I lay no mighty stress upon them.

I lay a much greater stress upon another Appointment of the Church, relating to Baptism; and that is, the Use of Godfathers and Godmothers. I had before occasion to vindicate this Institution from the Charge, or rather the *Suspicion* or *Imagination*, of an evil Tendency and Effect: And now I shall shew it to be a *wise*, an *useful*, and *necessary* Institution. And though your Author has been pleased not only to slight it, *as not needful*, but to condemn it, *as not proper*; some of the hottest Advocates for the Dissenting Cause, and most given to libel, overlash, and run riot in opposition to the Church, have owned it to be not only *useful*, but, in many Cases, *necessary*. *Mr. *Pierce* himself, amidst all his Misrepresentations of our Sense and Practice in this Particular, confesses it to be so. *It is not*, (says he) *any matter of Controversy between us, Whether it be*
lawful

lawful and useful, that, when Infants are baptized, some honest pious Persons should make a publick Profession of the Christian Faith in the Assembly, and promise to take care (if God spares them) that the Child, as soon as he becomes capable, should be trained up in the Christian Faith and Practice. Nor do we dispute whether any, besides the Parents, may be allowed to perform this Office. We acknowledge there is a Necessity they should, in some Cases; as, if the Parents are dead; or, by reason of their great distance, cannot be present at the baptizing their Children; or, if they are so ignorant in the Christian Religion, or so heretical in their Opinions, and vicious in their Lives, that their Promise cannot be looked upon as fit to be taken by the Church. — Now, Sir, if it be necessary in so many Cases, I would beg leave to observe three things; the first, that our Church has done wisely in requiring it in all Cases, that the Clergy may not be obliged to be always making odious Distinctions (which sometimes, perhaps, would be groundless and arbitrary too) among their Parishioners, by requiring Sponsors for the Children of some, and not of others, which would have been a Source of endless Heats and Animosities between them. The second is, that Mr. Peirce, and such of his Brethren as are of his Mind, are much to blame for not introducing into their Churches the Use of Sponsors, at least in those Cases wherein they allow it to be necessary. And the other thing I would observe, most to my present Purpose, is, that, since they have not done it, we have, in our Church, this Advantage towards the bringing up of Children in the Fear of God, and the Faith of the Gospel, which is not in yours.

I hope, Sir, you will not offer to argue with me (as Gentlemen of your Persuasion commonly do) against the Institution of Godfathers and Godmothers,

from the little Thought and Care they are often seen to take in discharging the Obligations they are under. For, if you do, I shall be obliged to reply, it is nothing to the purpose; because our present Enquiry is, Whether the Church does not afford its Members some great and special Advantages towards growing in Grace and Goodness, above what are to be found among you; not, whether all its Members do their Duties, and make a right Use of those Advantages it affords them. And yet, if you insist upon it, we are ready to join Issue with you, even upon that footing. We will not deny, but the greatest part of those who undertake this Office do not discharge it so conscientiously as they ought (as Parents themselves often do not) and heartily wish * some things were either removed or regulated, whereby that, in part, is occasioned. But then, Sir, there *are* some, who *do* make a Conscience of doing their Duties in it: And it is worth while to keep up the Institution for *their* Sakes. And, as far as *their* honest and faithful Discharge of *their* Duty goes, so far the Church actually receives Benefit, of which, you know, there is nothing in *your* Churches. The late Dr. *Bray* was a very observing Man, and watchful Pastor; and he assures us, *He has known, himself, many Instances of Persons, who owe that Un-*

* Such, for example, as the high Fees given to Nurses, Midwives, and Servants. These have been the Occasion of much Perplexity and Trouble to many Parents, who have not known how to ask their Friends to do an Office so expensive to them. And this Perplexity of the Parents has not only grown into a sort of Disaffection to the very Institution, but has often obliged them to pass over their more serious Friends and Relations, who could not conveniently (they thought) or would not care to part with the Sums expected, and to take up with others, loose and disorderly Persons, who would more readily, or could better do it; whereby the Office has been exposed to Contempt and Ridicule, and the End of it, in those Instances, quite defeated.

derstanding they have of Religion, and the Fear of God, purely, next under God, to the Care of their Godfathers and Godmothers. I believe him: For I can myself name others, who have been more mindful of the pious Education of the Children they were Sureties for, than their Parents were, and, particularly, have procured for them the religious Education of our Charity Schools, which their Parents took no Care to do. And, I suppose, there are few who make any Observations of this nature, but can point out to you other Instances of the like kind.

The next Administration in our Church is Confirmation. This, you know, you have wholly discarded. And, surely, you will be obliged to acknowledge, you have lost thereby a very great Advantage: For, when it is received after due Preparation, and with the requisite Qualifications and Dispositions, it cannot but greatly conduce to future Holiness of Life. Many Protestant Churches, besides our own, have this Opinion of it, and do accordingly retain it. The Judgment of *Calvin*, that it is an *Apostolical Institution*, is well known; as is also his Wish, that it were every where restored. And I can tell you of one (in his day one of the greatest Oracles of your Party^a) who declared his thorough Approbation of it, and, in the late times called loudly for its Restoration, and said, *The Directory, without it, was more imperfect than the Common-Prayer.* The late Dr. *Calamy* too was in the same Sentiments touching this Matter. ^b *It would be (says he) very becoming and advantageous, did Persons every where, before they first communicated, freely profess their Sincerity and Constancy in*

^a Mr. Baxter.

^b *Practical Discourse concerning Vows*, p. 87.

their

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*their Baptismal Covenant or Vow, and openly declare themselves, in the Face of a Christian Congregation, Enemies to the Devil, the World, and the Flesh. And this is the most considerable Part of that which has been wont to be called Confirmation; a Thing much practised and insisted upon in the Primitive Church, though of later Times much neglected, and by some laid aside, as useless; the more's the Pity. And, surely, Confirmation, if not absolutely necessary, is yet very requisite in any Church which practises Infant Baptism. We are used to be pressed, by the Antipædobaptists, with the Conveniency and Usefulness of deferring Baptism, till People arrive at Years of Discretion, when they may, upon mature Judgment and deliberate Choice, consent to, and take upon themselves the Covenant of God in it. And how do we answer them? Not by saying, there is no need, no use and benefit of so doing; but by telling them, we do it in Confirmation. How you answer them I know not. Indeed, Dr. Calamy does inform us, that ^a *Conversation with the Pastor of each Christian Society, is expected before any one's first communicating, that Satisfaction may be given, that such as come to partake of the holy Eucharist, do understand the Nature of their Baptismal Obligation, and are willing to stand to it.* But what is this to those who dare not offer themselves to the Sacrament, or are not admitted to it? And as to those who are, is such a private Transaction, between them and their Minister, to be held enough? No, by no means; and Dr. Calamy himself not only confesses, but contends, it is not enough. ^b *The publick Transaction of this Matter he thinks much more eligible; and observes to that Purpose, that**

^a *Account of Protestant Dissenters, p. 47.*

^b *Practical Discourse concerning Vows, p. 89.*

many Instances may be produced, where very near as much depends upon the Manner of doing a Thing, as on the Thing itself, and this he takes to be one. And if it would not be (he says) too great a Digression, he could make it appear, that the Scripture favours such a public Recognition of the Baptismal Vow, and that 'tis agreeable to the Practice of the Church in several successive Ages. And I can't help further observing, by the bye, that he plainly approves Imposition of Hands, joined with serious Prayers to God for the strengthening and confirming Grace of his Spirit, for those who come to own their Baptismal Vow, openly, in the Face of a Christian Congregation, and an authoritative Benediction on the Part of the Minister; as God's Officer. I will own to you, we are bound to perform the Baptismal Covenant, whether we renew and take it solemnly upon ourselves, or not. But, surely, you cannot think, that the open and solemn Renewal of it, before God and many Witnesses, according to the manner of our Church, is a needless, or useless thing, and has no Fitness to awaken and engage Men to the better Performance of it. Let it be supposed, there are some who come to Confirmation more for *Form* and *Custom*, than any thing else, and are neither better nor worse for it. That is their own Fault; and they may come, upon no higher Principles and Motives, to Baptism, or the Lord's Supper, and be just as much benefited by those Ordinances. But, then, there are many others, who come to it prepared and qualified as the Church would have them, and as they ought to be. And are not these like to be better for it? Does not God give his holy Spirit to them that ask it? And if ever the Unction of the Holy Spirit can be expected, as the Return of Prayer, surely it must be, when the chief Pastor and his Flock assemble together on purpose to implore it,
and

and when those on whose behalf they implore it are qualified to receive it, when, after a thorough Instruction in the Nature of their Baptismal Covenant, and their Obligations to perform their Part of it, they appear, upon mature Deliberation and free Choice, in the Presence of God, and the Face of his Church, to own and renew, and are sincerely resolved, with the Help of God's Grace, to perform it. And if you can shew, there is nothing in all this that is *engaging*, nothing that is like to *blind* and *awe* the Conscience, nothing fit to make them more virtuous and religious, and to help them forward in the right Way that leads to everlasting Life, I will never talk more of the Fitness of any thing for any thing, as long as I live.

We have, Sir, another powerful Means for the promoting of Virtue, and furtherance of Holiness, which seems little minded in your Churches; and that is *Fasting*. I don't mean fasting on rare and special Occasions, on account of national Calamity, or Guilt; but fasting frequently, and in a regular Course, for mortifying the Body, and subduing or weakening the Principles of Sin, the *Lusts that war in our Members*. No body can doubt of this being a Duty. Perhaps, Nature itself teaches it; for we see it practised by some Heathens, as well as Jews and Christians. On which account, we may the less wonder, if it be true, that there is not to be found, in the New Testament, any positive Injunction of it. I say, if it *be* true; because the Words of our Lord concerning his Followers and Disciples, when he should be taken from them, *and then shall they fast*, are understood by some in a *preceptive* Sense. Let that be as it will: the Duty is sufficiently established by his prescribing *Rules*, and giving *Cautions* about it, and proposing everlasting Rewards to the right Performance of it, as
you

you will find he does, *Mat. ix. 16, 17, 18*; and by the Practice of his immediate Disciples, and particularly *St. Paul*, who speaks of his *Fastings often*, and *keeping under his Body, lest, when he had preached to others, he himself should be a Cast-away.*

By this Instance we may see, that the Discipline of Fasting is requisite even for those, for many of those, to be sure it is, who are yet temperate in their whole Course of Life. How much more, then, for others, who live in Pleasure and Indulgence; in order to correct the Rankness, and reduce the Redundancy of their Spirits, whereby they are filled with worldly and carnal Affections, and pushed violently on to many things which *drown them in Destruction and Perdition?* Therefore the Church rightly prays, *We may have Grace to use such Abstinence, that the Flesh may be subdued to the Spirit.* Nor does she only pray for the Grace, but teaches the Duty in her Homilies, and in the Sermons and Exhortations of her Clergy; and has appointed proper Seasons for the Exercise thereof, one solemn annual Fast, others at proper Distances, and one Day in most Weeks of the Year as you may see in the Rules and Tables prefixed to the Book of Common-Prayer.

As to our *Practice* in the Matter of Fasting, be pleased to take Notice, *that* is not the Subject of our present Enquiry or Debate. *That*, I will own to you is not, generally, what it ought to be. I say generally, because the devoutest Members of our Church do yet make a Conscience of this Duty, and exercise themselves continually in the Practice of it. However, you see, Sir, here, the watchful Care of our Church, that this important Duty be not overlooked or neglected. And, unless you can shew the like Care is taken of it among you, con-

sees the Advantages you lose by being divided from it. If I am not mightily deceived, you will be found to have reformed in this, just as you have done in many other Instances; that is, thrown away the thing, out of Dislike to the *false* or *nugatory* manner in which it was observed in the Papacy. I don't remember that any Notice is taken of it in those Formularies, which are regarded among you, as containing your Faith and Practice; nor have I yet met with any Sermons, or other Treatises of your Ministers, shewing the Obligation, and pressing the Practice of it upon their People; nor have I heard of its being practised even by the strictest and devoutest among you. If these Things be otherwise than they appear to me, and I am really mistaken, *here, Sir, I am*, ready to retract my Mistake, being desirous in *this*, as in *all* other Things, to be set right.

I also humbly apprehend, that as these are proper means to *promote* Virtue and Holiness, so Virtue and Holiness are *taught* in a better Manner in our Church. As your Author observes, that *different Parties of Christians have their peculiar Ways in Preaching, and the present Conformists and Non-conformists have their different Manners, as well in composing, as delivering their Sermons*, so their different Manners are to be plainly seen in this, that the former preach up more the *Duties*, the latter more the *Privileges* of the Saints, holding in Contempt the preaching of Duties, under the low and degrading Character (as they, at least, mean it) of preaching up Morality, or good Works. No body doubts, but preaching the Privileges of Believers is, or may be, being properly managed, very useful. Our very Catechism begins with teaching our Children their Privileges, as visible baptised

tified Christians ; and we may properly say of these two, what our Lord said concerning the Tythe of *Mint*, and *Anise*, and *Cummin*, on the one hand, and *Judgment*, *Mercy*, and *Faith*, on the other, *These ought ye to have done, and not to have left the other undone.* However, of the two, your neglect of preaching the *Duties* is more evident, as it is, in itself, more *inexcusable*, and of *worse Consequence*, than ours of preaching the *Privileges* of the Faithful. And what but a Consciousness of his Brethren's Neglect of, and of their, or, at least, their People's Averseness to this sort of preaching, led Dr. *Watts* to attempt to explain, in two Volumes of Sermons, *many of the Duties of the Christian Life, that refer to our fellow Creatures*, and to bespeak a favourable Reception to them in such Words as these ? *I hope no Man who loves the Gospel of Christ will knit his Brows at the Title Page, or throw Disgrace upon the Book with a Contempt of dull Morality.* If such a Person would give himself leave to peruse these Sermons, perhaps he would meet with so much of Christ and the Gospel in them, that he might learn to love his Saviour better than ever he did, and find how necessary moral Duties are to make his own Religion either Safe or Honourable. While we are saved (continues he) by Faith of the Blood and Righteousness of the Son of God, we must remember also that 'tis such a Faith as works by Love ; for Faith without Works is dead and useless to all Purposes of Hope and Salvation. The Works which the Doctor recommends, and we desire to be preached and inculcated, are not those they make such a stir with in the Church of Rome ; not Penances, Pilgrimages, endowing of Monasteries, and

enriching the Shrines of Saints; but the substantial good Works of Faith and Piety, Justice and Charity, of Temperance, Meekness, and Humility, and such other as God has commanded us to walk in. And I am free to leave it to any unprejudiced Man to judge, whether *despising and neglecting*, or *being instant* in the preaching of these truly good and essential Works of Religion, be the more likely way to advance Virtue and holy Living.

I would also further observe, that the Church has no Doctrines whereby she *destroys* what she has *built*, none whereby a holy Life is either made *unnecessary*, or *discouraged*. She does not teach the absurd and dangerous Doctrines (give me Leave to call them) of absolute Election and Reprobation, with the Points hanging thereupon, which were once the *Shibboleth* of your Party, and *even now* are taught, it is supposed, by the greatest Part of your Ministers. I say nothing of the Antinomian Doctrines. The rank Antinomianism of Dr. *Chriss*, which once greatly prevailed in the Churches, is, now, I will suppose, generally decried. And yet, let me tell you, there is reason to fear, there are those among you who have no Dislike to his Positions. And this, I cannot but suspect, is one Reason that such mighty Civilities are shewn, such Countenance and Encouragement given, by divers of your Ministers, to a young, *conceited, solifidian Enthusiast*, who has lately started up among us. It is well, Men do not *always* act according to their *Principles*, nor set their *Practices* by their *Opinions*. If they did, and the forementioned Doctrines were to spread, and generally prevail, there would be *little Virtue*, and *few good Works* in the World.

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As it is not my Intention to exhaust the Subject, and to count up *all* the Advantages *we* enjoy, and *you* lose, by living out of Communion with the Church; so, I will put you in mind of only *one* more, and that is in regard to *Devotion*, in the limited Sense of the Word, as it signifies Prayer, particularly that which is public. In *our* Church, we have *better Provision*, and *more frequent Opportunities* afforded for it, than are to be had among *you*. Is it not true, Sir, that your Meeting-houses are shut up from one Lord's Day to another, unless it be here and there one, where there happens to be a Lecture on the Week Days? Whereas, in our Church, public Prayers are ordered to be read every Day; and if, in small Villages, where Families live dispersed, and there are few can afford Time, or have Inclination to attend them, the thing is generally impracticable, it is well known to be practised in all Cities, and most great Towns in the Kingdom; and, in *London*, you cannot but have heard, there are Opportunities for public Prayer, not only every Day, but every Hour of it. So that a Man, in the Hurry of great Business, if he can find half an Hour of leisure Time, (as he easily may, one Part of the Day or other, if he be so minded, and his Thoughts turn that way) may go into a Church, and say his Prayers, whereby his Business may be sanctified, and rendered more acceptable to God; and they who have more Leisure may do it oftener. —It has been the Wish of some pious Men, that there were Protestant Foundations, where Men or Women devoutly disposed, and disengaged from the World, (without entangling themselves with any Vows) might live together in Society, and give themselves up to the Service of God. I shall not trouble you with my Thoughts, whether such Societies be desirable; but, really, I think they are not

much wanted: For such Persons as have no Attachment to the World, and are of devout Tempers, and would probably, embrace that Sort of Life, have it now in their Power to live in a way that will fully answer all the religious Ends and Purposes thereof. In most Cities and great Towns, and especially in *London* (as I said before) they may live as retired, and say their Prayers as often as they please. In the midst of the Crowd, they may be, as as if they were in the Desert, overlooking the World, and overlooked by it. They will not be confined *there*, as in such Societies, to one Set of Company, agreeable, or otherwise, just as it shall happen; but, if they chuse any, may have only those for their Companions and Familiars, who have the same spiritual Gust and Relish with themselves. And they may, now and then, launch out into, and mix with the World, whenever a Prospect opens, and Opportunity offers, of doing Good in it. Here they may dedicate any Portion of their Time to holy Meditation, and private Prayer, and as much of it as they please to public. And there is scarce a Day in the Week but they may hear the Word of God preached in one or other of our Churches, nor (in some Parishes, if I mistake not) any Lord's Day, or Holiday, but they may receive the Holy Sacrament upon it. *Here*, they may say their Prayers without Formality, and say them often (because without Force and Compulsion) without Weariness, and may be Recluses without that Spleen, Melancholy, Envy, Pride, and those Bickerings, Factions, and Contentions, which are well known to prevail in the Cloisters, among the People who (in their way) have given themselves to God. Are not these, Sir, very powerful Means towards the Advancement of Devotion? And, if you cannot say you have any such, which way can you avoid owning, they are
great

great Advantages on our Side, unless it should be by undervaluing and making Devotion a thing of no account.

After the Church has taken such good Care for the *Faith*, the *Practice*, and *Devotion* of its Members, it cannot but be a mighty Satisfaction to them, to see themselves, too, *on the safe Side*, in regard to two Things, the Charge of Schism, and the want of valid regular Administrations. There is a stale Jest that goes about, and some People have taken mightily to it, That Schism is only a *theological Scare-crow*. A Jest—which has rendered their Minds perfectly impenetrable by all the Reasonings that can be offered, to shew them the Danger of it. I hope your Ministers never speak of it so slightly; if they do, I must take the Liberty to say, they cannot be sincere: For I have always observed, that when any Part of their Congregations is growing mutinous, and seems in a Disposition to divide itself from the rest, they never fail to ring in their Ears the Sefulness of making a Schism in the Church, in order to deter them from their Purposes. Though, by the way, I think they are a little too rash in venturing the mention of Schism to them; for that may put them in mind of the Schism of the whole Congregation from the Church of *England*, and of their Duty to return to it. Believe me, Sir, at least believe the Scriptures, and the Voice of Catholic Antiquity, that the Charge of Schism, where it can fairly be fixed, is not to be slighted. The least Suspicion of it, a Man would think, should not a little discompose a *scrupulous*, or *tender* Conscience. But how a Conscience in either of those States can digest a Schism which is so *manifest* and *causeless*, and, by consequence, so *unwarrantable* as the present, is past my Skill to find out.

I am aware, Sir, you are accustomed to call your Schism a *peaceable Separation*; and as the clapping a plausible Name upon an ill thing, has, in all Cases, a strange Power to *change*, and *meliorate* the Idea of it, of which I could soon give you twenty Instances; so, in the present Case you can hardly conceive how a Thing which you are used to call by so *good*, and so *soft* a Name, can be so very criminal. But I must own, Sir, my Inability to apprehend, with what Sense or Consistency those two Words can be put together. The very *Nature* and *Essence* of the *Substantive* excludes the *Epithet* you join to it. And if I was writing to a perverse Adversary, as I am to a Friend, I should be ready to call this same *peaceable Separation* of yours, a Piece of arrant Nonsense and Contradiction. Every causeless Separation, Sir, from the Church, is a Breach of that Peace and Unity that *ought* to be in it; and therefore, no such Separation *can* be peaceable.—Put the Case, that a Wife should take a fancy to live by herself, in some private Part of the House, forsaking as well the Bed as the Board of her Husband; and, by little Artifices and crafty Suggestions, endeavour to engage the Children and Servants of the Family in sidings against him. Would you call this a *peaceable Separation*? I am very certain you would *not*. No, Sir; the Peace of that Family is broken, though there should be neither fighting nor scolding; but all the Decencies of well-bred Hatred or Indifferency should be kept up. Or, if you think the Case of a Wife, separating herself from her Husband, after this manner, is not so like, I will put another. Suppose two or three of the Counties in *Great Britain* or *Ireland*, should take a Disgust at *Monarchical* Government, and, throwing off their Allegiance to his Majesty, go about to form
them.

themselves into a Commonwealth: Would you allow *this* to be called a peaceable Separation? No more, I dare say, than the former. You are too good a Subject of the King to speak, or to hear any Body else, with Patience, speak of it in that *soft* and *tender* manner; and would certainly pronounce it a *disloyal* and *rebellious* Proceeding, though it were ever so much their desire to do all *without Tumult*, with great Professions of Honour for the Person of his Majesty, and of mighty Good-will to the rest of their Fellow-subjects, who thought fit to continue firm in their Allegiance to him. And if *this* Separation would not be *peaceable* and innocent, how, Sir, can *yours* be? The Catholic Church is *one outward and visible Society*, divinely instituted, and indeed the most admirable and glorious Society, that ever has been, or will be seen under Heaven; and (consequently) whenever a Breach is made in the Unity thereof, when Dissensions arise in it, especially, when they come to be consummated in opposite Communion, the Peace of the Church is evidently lost, though that of the State, possibly, may be preserved, and People may be kept from coming to Blows about it: Yet even that, you are not to be told, has sometimes happened.

The Case is yet worse, when you leave the Communion (as I think you do) of your lawful Bishops and Priests, duly ordained to their Office, to put yourselves under the Guidance and Administrations of others, not duly ordained to it. I pretend not to assert, that the Administrations of such, where no other can be had, are of no Effect; but am firmly persuaded that, in Cases of real and unavoidable Necessity, God will confer upon Believers in a more compendious Way, all the Benefits of his saving Sacraments. And the same I am willing to believe, in regard to those who attend such Administrations;

strations through invincible Ignorance, and a natural Incapacity to judge of these Matters. But, as I am sure, the latter is far from being your Case, so you will not say, I presume, the former is. And therefore you cannot depend, at least, with so much Assurance as is requisite for the Peace and Acquiescence of your Mind, that such Ordinances will be blessed to you. But, to set things at the lowest, the Callings and Ordinations of your Ministers, and, by consequence, their Administrations, are, most certainly, irregular. And an unnecessary, whether it be a factious, or only a wanton Departure from Regularity, from the primitive Rule and Order established in the Church, cannot, surely, be pleasing to God. How it is, Sir, with you I know not; but sure I am, were I of a Church which I beheld thus lying, and choosing to lie, in these Irregularities and Defects, I should have no Peace till I was out of it, though the godliest People in the Nation, or those who are reputed such, were universally crowding into it.

And now, Sir, I have gone through the *special Obligations*, which your Author supposes you are under, to a more eminent Holiness of Life, with the *peculiar Advantages* you are *pretended* also to enjoy, and some of those many, which, I humbly apprehend, *we* in the Communion of the Church *do* enjoy above you, in order to it. Which of these, upon the Comparison, are the most solid Advantages, and of the most real Efficacy towards rendering Men holy, must be left to your serious Consideration.

But I shall hardly be thought to have finished the Task I undertook, without going a Step or two farther, without considering together the Lives of Conformists and Nonconformists, or, at least, seeing what may be reasonably said in abatement of the

Fals,

Fact, which you seem so firmly to believe, and so much to rejoice in, that the Members of Dissenting Churches do greatly excel the rest of the Nation in Purity and Sanctity of Life; and then, in disproof of the Conclusion you would draw from it, that your Way of Religion is, *therefore*, better, or that this Consideration may justly prejudice, if not determine the Choice of any Person in its Favour, or make him, if he was bred up in it, quite easy in the Profession of it. If there really be such a remarkable Superiority on your Side, I doubt, you will be still ready to suspect, there must be, somewhere or other, in your Churches, great Advantages concerning the Things of Religion and Godliness, though you should find yourself obliged to give up those on which your Author has insisted, or to own those in our Church which I have insisted on. If there be no Superiority at all, or but little, or not greater than may be accounted for, by considering the particular Situation, and other Circumstances of Dissenters, there will be a Presumption, that you have no Advantages above *us*. Let us then see how the *Fact* stands.

When we were discoursing upon this Subject, you gave me, I think, a Hint; but indeed, so distant a one, that I did not then think myself obliged to take any notice of it, concerning the Lives of Ministers, as well as the People, on both Sides: And, it may not, perhaps, be amiss to enter, *now*, a little, into some Considerations of that sort. A strict Comparison between them is not the thing I intend. Any such Comparison would not only be odious, but of dangerous Consequence, as it might lessen the Credit of them both, and, by natural Consequence, the Credit of Religion itself. It would be something like comparing *moral* with *positive* Duties, the *internal* with the *external* Evidences

of Revealed Religion; the Advocates for one Side saying, inconsiderately, all they can to disparage the other, whilst the Infidel, laughing in his Sleeve, greedily picks up all that is said against *both*, to set them *both* at *naught*. You shall then see, I will not go about to raise the Characters of *ours*, by dishonouring and vilifying *your* Ministers, nor follow the Example which some of them have set me, who have published to the World, that *a very great many Clergyman* (*some*, it seems, would not do, nor *many*, nor *a great many*, but it must be *a very great many*: which, one would think, can be meant for no fewer than a third or fourth Part of the Whole, so many, he says) *have little to distinguish them from Heathens, or to persuade a Belief of their Christianity; nay, that their Lives are worse than those of Pagans.* Notwithstanding the Character which this Gentleman is pleased to give of them, which very probably, one time or other, will have the Honour to be found among the Gleanings of some Infidel Writer; I will venture to say, they deserve a very different one, (nor do I mean or desire the Dissenting Ministers should be excluded from the Benefit of it) that they are, in general, the most *irreproachable, uncorrupt, and virtuous* Part of the Nation. I suppose, you will say, *So they ought to be*; and you will say true. Nor shall I say false, when I say, *So they are*. They are still, Sir, let their Enviars and Maligners say what they will, *the Salt of the Earth*; and though they have lost something of their primitive Savour (as, in length of time, all things do) the World, if it were not for them, would quickly grow so corrupt, there would be no enduring, or living in it. Take, Sir, if you please, any corporate Body, Trade, Profession, or Order of Men,

¹ Peirce's *Vindic. of Dissenters*, Part I. p. 279.

of any Credit among us, and compare them with the Clergy, as to the general Course and Tenour of their Lives, and you will soon find, (though, I thank God, too, there are some of exemplary Sanctity of Life, in every Order and Profession) yet, I say, you will soon find, upon such a Comparison, what I now say to be true. Or only dress up in your Imagination (which is a very good one) any one of those Orders and Professions, in the *Clerical Habit*, put them on the *Gown*, and clap upon their Heads the *broad-brim'd Beaver Hat*, with the *Rose* on it; then place them, some in Town, and some in the Country, so that they shall not be suspected to be other than real Clergymen, and let them pursue the same Course of Life they did before; and, in a few Months, you will imagine you see every Mouth open against them, and hear every Place ring, and that in another manner than the most infamous Places do now, with the Corruption and Degeneracy, the intolerable Indiscretions and Vices of the Clergy. Those that *before* lived in some Credit, as Laymen, will be *now* little esteemed, and pass for *worthless*, if not *scandalous Ministers*. And those who enjoyed, *before their Clerical Appearance*, great Wealth, or high Dignities, unenvied, will *now* hardly be thought deserving a Country School, or Curacy. It is not pretended to be denied, but there are some, who really are of the Cloth, that are a Disgrace to it. The Clergy are but Men, and to be sure, come into the World with the same original Corruption and Viciousity that other Men do; and therefore it is no wonder, if they have, *all*, their *Faults* and *Blemishes*, their Frailties and Imperfections, and some are not free from greater *Crimes* and *Scandals*. It may be, you will say, we hear not so often of Scandals arising among

among the Dissenting Ministers, as among the Clergy. Would it be reasonable to expect you should? Is it likely, there should be found as many among *ten*, as an *hundred*; among a *hundred*, as a *thousand*; or among a *thousand*, as *ten thousand* Persons? In most Neighbourhoods, perhaps, there are *ten*, and in some, *twice that Number* of regular Clergymen, to *one* Dissenting Minister. And if but *one* of that Number be found, not so blameless and irreproachable in his Life, as that single Gentleman happens to be, we are presently bid to take notice, how much better *your* Ministers live, than *ours*. But it does not follow. If you would judge rightly in this Case, you must produce an equal Number of each Sort; and for *twenty* regular Clergymen (suppose) all living together in the same Neighbourhood, all perfectly known to you, you must bring us *twenty* Dissenting Ministers, though you should fetch a Compass of forty Miles for them, to whom, excepting, perhaps, two or three, we are absolute Strangers, and of whose Lives we have never heard any Character, good or bad. Or if it happens that we have heard of *some* of them any ill thing, we have not, perhaps, the means to satisfy ourselves whether the thing be true or false; and so, it will, probably, pass for an idle and uncertain Report. And if we *suppose*, or though we *know* it to be true, yet as we know not their Persons, and hardly, perhaps, their Names, it will make little Impression on our Minds, and the Scandal of it will soon be forgotten.

While we are considering the Lives of your Ministers, it will be proper, as it is obvious, to observe, that they are not so much exposed to *undeserved* Obloquy and Censure, as most of the Clergy of the Established Church unavoidably are. For having no farther Concern with the Pockets of the
People

People than they themselves like, and are pleased to permit, they happily escape the morose or peevish Reflections of the Covetous or Knavish, which our Clergy, by the most reasonable and conscionable Demand of their legal Rights, often bring upon themselves. If a Clergyman ever demands *Small Dues*, *Avarice* is presently objected to him. It will be said, *It is beneath him to mind such Things*; though, it may be, through the Sacrilege of former Times, he has scarcely any thing else left him. If he finds himself obliged, at any time, to take the *Remedy of Law*, though it were in the *easiest* and *cheapest* Method the Law prescribes, against such as withhold these Dues, or greater ones, the Charge of *Contentiousness* is sure to be added to the former. And if he is not content with those poor Pittances which the Consciences of *some* of his Parishioners would serve *them* to pay him, or which they fancy is all that is due to him, according to those crude Notions of Law and Right which they frame out of their own Heads, he shall hardly escape the Imputation of being *injurious* and *oppressive*. This is the hard Fate of most of *our* Clergy, especially the *Vicars*; while *your* Ministers not only live at Ease, and free from Vexation, upon voluntary Contributions, but free also from those *unmerited* Reflections and Reproaches, which will often fall upon those of the Establishment. And I have sometimes been ready to think, that, if the Wisdom of the Legislature could find out a Way to settle, *on a solid Foundation*, upon the *poor Vicar*, some equivalent and independent Revenue, in Lieu of these *small Matters*, it would not only secure his Peace, but help him to support and keep up his Credit and Esteem, better than now he *can* do, among his Neighbours, and be (consequently) a real Advancement to Religion.

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Then again, the Tempers and Conducts of *your* People and *ours*, in regard to the *real* Faults of Ministers, are very different. *Our* People, knowing they do not depend altogether upon the Credit of their Guides, but have the Laws for the Support of the Church they are of, are apt to think there is no need of *close* and *subtle dealing*; and therefore are observed to be undisguised in all their Conduct, free and open (probably too much so) in their Discourses and Censures of whatever they take to be amiss in the Lives of their Ministers. You shall hear them talk every Day of the Faults and Misbehaviours of this and that Clergyman, *with as little Reserve* as they would of their best Qualities and greatest Virtues; while your People are observed to be *wonderfully secret* in *these*, as indeed, in *all* your Affairs. The arrantest Gossip and Tittle-tattle in the Congregation shall carry it with all the Closeness and Secrecy of a Confessor, in regard to the Failings of her Pastor; and they are seldom publicly known, unless an open Rupture with his People, or his entertaining Thoughts of Conformity, brings them out. And then indeed, what was before *spoken only in the Ear in Closets*, shall be proclaimed upon the House-tops.

It should be considered too, that as their Faults and Failings are more carefully concealed, so their Virtues and good Qualities are more industriously published. Such as lie under the Imputation of Heresy, or have set themselves at the Head of a Party divided from the Church, will never want Virtues and Accomplishments, *Intellectual*, or *Moral*. 'Tis now, for that, just as it was in the Days of *Tertullian*, *Nusquam facilius proficitur quam in castris rebellium*. Men's Characters improve strangely, and take a wonderful Growth, in that Situation, and that, I doubt, is one Motive and Inducement

to many to make choice of it. Those who bear Religion no good Will, will be sure to be the *Trumpeters* of *their* Praises, because they help to *confound* it. And those of their own Party are always found forwarder and louder in extolling them above their Merits and Deservings, than such as adhere to their Orthodox and regular Ministers ever are to do *them* common Justice. You must have observed, this is the general Disposition of your Lay-People towards their Ministers. And your Ministers themselves seem agreed to take all Occasions to magnify one another; some Affectations of which sort I think I can plainly see, particularly in their Funeral Sermons, almost always in regard to the Dead, and sometimes the Living. By such Methods as these they may have, possibly, acquired a Reputation of Strictness of Life, above our Clergy, among the weak and prejudiced, while more competent and impartial Judges see little or nothing they have, in that respect, to boast of; hardly, indeed, so much, as, when their Circumstances, Situations, and Professions are considered, it may seem reasonable to expect.

For there are, Sir, some Considerations of that sort which make us naturally look for, and think we may justly expect to find, a greater Sanctity of Manners among *them*, than the Conforming Clergy. Their very Non-conformity is founded upon an open Profession of great *Tenderness of Conscience*, which cannot bear the least Instance of Sin, and starts at any Appearance of Evil. And if, *under such a Profession*, their Lives should be found, in any Degree, disorderly, they cannot be ignorant they should be, deservedly, hissed at, and esteemed some of the vilest of Men. They must be also sensible, how much they depend, for their Maintenance, upon the good Thoughts their People have of them, and the favourable Opinion of those in Power for their Toleration. Thus, not only
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the Reputation, but the very Being and Subsistence of the Party they have set themselves at the Head of, depends upon the Goodness of their Characters, as Men of Piety and Virtue. And these are strong Obligations, if Reasons of Conveniency and present Interest may be called Obligations, to endeavour to *appear* such. I speak not thus to insinuate that they *only appear* such. Many, doubtless, and I hope most of them, *do* study to *be* what they are obliged to *appear* to be; tho' it is likely too, there may be *some* who only study *Appearances*. And, as they have *special Reasons* to approve themselves good Men, so they have *fewer Temptations* to be otherwise, not being exposed to so many Influences prejudicial to the Virtue of Men, as the Clergy not only in ours, but in all national Churches whatever, unavoidably are. And if, notwithstanding all this, our Clergy are much upon a footing with *them* in all manner of virtuous and holy Living, it is, in my Opinion, a just Matter of Commendation to them.

By this time, Sir, I should hope you might be pretty well satisfied, that the Lives of *your* Ministers do not excel, in point of Strictness and Regularity, those of *our* Clergy, so much as you seemed before to have thought: But if you are still of Opinion that they do, I must, I think, leave you to enjoy it, there being no Way to extort it from you, but by canvassing and comparing the Lives and Characters of Particulars, which (not to repeat the Reasons I before offered why I declined such a Proceeding) would be as *foolish* to attempt, and as *impossible* to do, in any manner that shall be tolerably satisfactory, as it would be to determine who are the *fairest*, the *best shaped*, or *handsomest* Men. One thing, however, I have to offer you, in Balance; and that is, that the Lives of *our* Clergy are free from some Sorts of Guilt which,

which, pardon me, Sir, lie heavy upon *your* Ministers; I mean, the Guilt of their *uncatholic* and *schismatical* Proceedings. Most People, when they hear of the good or the bad Lives of any, think of nothing else but their being *chaste* and *temperate*, *just* and *honest* in their Dealings, *charitable* to the Poor, or otherwise; and discharging *well* or *ill* the relative Duties of Life; whether they practise the Virtues, or are free from the Vices of the interior and spiritual kind, they are not apt to consider. But they never reflect how they behave as Members of the Christian Society, the Church of God, and fulfil the Duties which they owe it. And yet this, surely, when we are speaking of Christians, should always enter into the Notion of good, or of bad living. In regard to these Matters, I mean those of the last sort, your Ministers, Sir, are notoriously peccant, throwing off the Authority of those whom they ought to obey and submit themselves to, and acting in open Contempt of them, dividing themselves causelessly from a sound Part of the Catholic Church which they belong to, and gathering to themselves Churches out of it; by which means the Household of God is divided into innumerable Sects and Parties, to the great Dishonour of Religion, the Scandal of Jews, Turks, and Heathens, the Sport of Infidels, unsettling the Weak, grieving the Minds of good Men, the Loss of Truth and Peace, and the utter Extinction of Charity among us. What some People may think of a Procedure which draws after it a Train of *such Consequences*, I know not; but will venture to say, all the Wit and Ingenuity in the Nation will never reconcile it with *holy living*. Sure I am, such as bring into the Church strange Doctrines, and cause Divisions in it, are called by *St. Paul*, *Carnal*, 1 Cor. iii. 4. *evil Workers*,

ers, Phil. iii. 2. *deceitful Workers*, 2 Cor. xi. 13. and *disorderly Walkers*, in another Place, 2 Thess. iii. 6. And why those who are called *so* by an Apostle, should be by *us* called, *absolutely good Livers*, I must needs own I am at a loss to understand, and leave you, Sir, to consider. And though I am far from presuming to judge any in regard to his eternal State, yet, when I consider with what Severity the fore-mentioned Disorders stand censured, and how the Authors or the wilful Abettors of them are stigmatized in the Word of God, I cannot doubt but *for these things he will bring them into Judgment*. And, perhaps, it may be found as hard to render an Account of *these*, as of *some other Sins*, which are esteemed *grosser*, and more *scandalous*. A thing, Sir, which I heartily wish you would lay to heart, and reflect seriously upon.

Let us now, Sir, if you please, go on to consider the Lives of the *common Professors* on both Sides. Upon this Head, though you always speak in Terms of great Moderation, others triumph over us without Mercy; but with little Reason, as, I hope, will plainly appear, when all fitting *Allowances* and *Deductions* have been made.

I must therefore protest against owning some for Members of the Church of *England*, who now (I am afraid) pass with *you* for such; Scepticks, Infidels, Libertines, and Rakes, Sharpers, Bullies, and blasphemous Gamesters, and a great Part of the *Beau Monde*, who never go to Church (if ever they *do* go) with the least Thought or Intention to serve God, or to profit by the Instructions they receive there, and will go as readily to a Meeting, whenever they have the same Reasons for going thither. I must also be bold to exclude many of your *Tip-top People*, who are too high and great to mind any Religion,

Religion, or to care what becomes of it. All these (I suppose) are called *ours*, because they are not *yours*; and they may be as well called *yours*, because they are not *ours*.

There is one thing, I imagine, which helps a good deal to make such disorderly People pass, in common Estimation, rather for *ours* than *yours*; and that is, their being more frequently and instantly applied to, admonished, and reprov'd, in order to reclaim them, by the Clergy, than by Dissenting Ministers. When there are any Persons of debauched Principles, or of loose Morals in a Parish, and who behave themselves notoriously and scandalously there, it is expected by all, that the Parish Minister should, and he thinks himself bound to deal with them, to shew them their Error, or their Sin. He considers every Man in his Parish, let him be what he will, whether Libertine or Infidel, whether Papist or Protestant Dissenter, nay, though he were a Jew, Mahometan, or Heathen, as one of the Souls committed to his Care at his Institution, and thinks himself oblig'd, as he really is, *ex officio*, to instruct and admonish him, as he has Opportunity, and make such pastoral Applications to him, as his Case requires. But no body looks for this from the Dissenting Minister *in* the Place, nor does he think himself concern'd, as indeed he is not, (otherwise, I mean, than in the way of brotherly Admonition and Reproof, such as one Christian Neighbour owes another) with any, besides those who *own* him for their Pastor, and *profess* themselves willing to walk with him in Christian Ordinances. Hence (as I said) it comes to pass, that this sort of Men are commonly thought to have some relation to the Church more than to the Meeting; though, in Truth and Reality, they are related to both alike, that is, indeed, to neither.

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Perhaps

Perhaps it will be said, they *call* themselves Churchmen, and talk for the Church. Not all of them, I presume. What, Sir, do you think of the Members of the *Calves Head Club*, who composed Antithems to be sung at their Meetings, full of Invec-tive or Ridicule against Priests and Bishops; Creeds, Common-prayer, Collects, and Lessons? Would you call these Churchmen, rather than Dissenters? And besides these, how many, of the same Characters, do we every where meet with, who do not *pretend* to be of our Church, and *talk always against it*, whilst others *are* of your Churches, and always *talk for* them? For there are, Sir, Dissenting Infidels, as well as Libertines, to my Knowledge. And it is remarkable, that the whole Tribe of Infidels have a particular Spite at the Church and Clergy, while you are *well* with them. They do *our* Clergy the greatest *Honour* by always *railing* at them; while they *dishonour your* Ministers with their *Panegyrics*. What are their Motives to this different Treatment of *you* and *us*, it, surely, concerns you, Sir, and may be worth your while to enquire.

But what, if after all, *every one of these* should be pleased to call themselves *Churchmen*?—Suppose, I should have a Fancy to call myself a Patient of Sir *Hans's*, and pique myself for having so great a Man for my Physician, while, perhaps, I never consulted him in all my Life, or, if I did, would never take the Medicines he ordered, nor follow the Methods he prescribed. Am I therefore his Patient? And is the Doctor to answer for all the Infirmities and Distempers I have about me, or his Skill in Physic to be questioned, on account of my ill Health? I hope not. So if a profligate immoral Wretch, who takes effectual Care not to be the better for the Church, by seldom or never coming at it; or, when he happens to be there, not minding, but rather disdain-

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ing and casting behind him all the Instructions that are given him, shall, nevertheless, take it into his Head, for some foolish Reason he may have to himself, to call himself a *Churchman*, Is he therefore a *Churchman*? And is the Church accountable for all the Crimes and Disorders of his Life? I desire to know the Reason why.—In a word, none should be esteemed Members of the Church, nor the Church accountable for any, but such as own its Authority, submit to its Orders and Rules of Discipline, and frequent its Worship. And when *all the rest* have been *thrown out*, and some *reasonable*, but very *small* Allowances have been made for *these*, the Comparison, I verily believe, will end not at all to *our* Disadvantage.

It is a thing confessed, and by ^a *your* Author, Sir, among others; and none, I think, will have the Face to deny it, (unless, perchance, it were some fiery Papist, such as *Bellarmino*, who says, *In the Catholic Church there are some bad Men, but, among the Heretics, not one good, no, not one*) I say it is owned, and cannot be denied, that *there are, in the Church of England, many holy Souls, who are of the first Rank in the School of Christ, Men who walk humbly with God in all the known Duties of the Christian State, who are dear to him, and whose Names have an honourable Place in the Book of Life.* And give me leave to observe, that these, for the generality, are the strictest and most zealous Members of the Church, not who *talk most* for it, and *cry it up most*, but who *reverence it most*, and live in the greatest *Subjection* to it. Which is just the *reverse* of what we see in the Church of *Rome*, where the best and holiest Men are observed to be commonly such, as have the *least* regard for the *peculiar* Doctrines and Practices of their Church, and are indeed but half Catholics. A pretty good Argument in my Opinion, that the Doctrine of that

^a *Humble Attempt*, p. 135.

Church is *unboly*, that of our Church *boly*, such as, far from undermining and destroying (as your Author injuriously pretends) does really further and promote all manner of Holiness of Life.

It is not to be thought; that the Christian Doctrine, though in its utmost Purity, will make all, who profess to receive and embrace it, good Christians; nor is it pretended that all the Members of our Church are such; it is too evident there are, among us many nominal Christians, as there are also among *you*. And if it prove true, that there are not *quite so many* even in proportion, we shall not wonder at *that*, if we do but consider the different Circumstances *you* and *we* are under. Those who have *no* Religion, but nevertheless, for their Credit's sake among their Neighbours, or other Reasons of the like sort, are obliged to profess *some*, will fall, on course, into the established Church, unless they are determined, which indeed often happens, by some particular Views and Interests, to go another Way, and join themselves to some Party of Dissenters: Not because the Doctrine or Discipline of the Church is more indulgent, or better suited to the Consciences and Lives of these Men, but because it is the Religion *by Law established*, the *public* and *national*, the most general, and therefore esteemed the most *fashionable* Religion. Such sort of Men always affect to be in the *most and best Company*: They love the beaten, the *high Road*, whether it be of Truth or Error, and would have been Presbyterians or Independants (or, perhaps, any thing else) if *their* Religions had been as long the Establishment as ours, and as much followed.

Let us, if you please, suppose the Church and Monarchy, after the great Rebellion and Usurpation, had never been restored, and your Presbyterians or congregational Men (for I know not

well,

well, Sir, which of those Names you *like best* to be called by, but take which of them you please) put the Case, I say, that either of these had continued in Possession of the Churches and public Revenues, and either of their Systems had been the Religion of the Magistrate, and the legal Establishment to this Day: In this Case, we (I dare say) *the Episcopal Party of the Church of England*, if we had not been quite rooted out, as *not fit to be tolerated*, (which indeed is most likely) should have been made, before now, the *sober Party*, and you, with all your supposed *Advantages* and *Obligations*, would have been as much below *us* in Strictness and Holiness of Life, as *we now are*, or are *supposed* to be, below *you*. I am ready to think it is *so* all the Christian World over.—The inferior tolerated Sects in other Countries did not, generally, set up, as they did here, under Pretences of greater Purity of Life, but only of greater Purity of Doctrine; and yet, the Followers of these, I guess, will be found, for the most part, to walk more orderly, than those of the established Religion of the Country. The public established national Religion, whatever it be, most abounds with mere *nominal* Professors; and, in the Nature of Things, it cannot well be otherwise: For those who are *void* of Religion, and (as we say) have it *to choose*, will naturally *choose* (as I said before) that which is *uppermost*, which the *great People* generally profess, and *they* can therefore profess with more Credit, Security, and Advantage.

I know it has been suggested, that the Church of *Scotland* is an Exception to *this*; nor will I pretend to be *Scotsman* enough to speak decisively to the Point. This, however, is certain, that the Episcopal Men would not yield to the other in point of Regularity and Strictness of Life, and some of their eminent Writers have pretended, they were super-

rior to 'em, in those Respects. And indeed, according to all the Information I have received, there is, among the Episcopal Party, if not so much of the *Form*, yet not less of the *Power* of Godliness, and if less *Enthusiasm*, yet quite as much of *real* and *substantial* Religion, as there is among the Presbyterians of that Nation. *Enthusiasm*, Sir, which the latter (they say) both Ministers and People, have a peculiar Turn and Disposition to, and are in a high Degree possessed with, is a glorious thing: The Glare of it dazzles the Eyes of the Weak and Ignorant: It passes with *them* for *Sanctity of Life*, or an infallible Mark of it; when it neither *is that*, nor perhaps, is *accompanied* with it. However, considering in the *most favourable light* those Appearances of Zeal and Devotion, and supposing there *is*, among *them*, as much *real Religion* and *genuine Piety*, as there may seem to any one to be, we ought to remember, that it was but Yesterday, in Comparison, that *they* were *hoisted up* into an *Establishment*, and the Episcopalians *brought under* them: And we may suppose, the Spirit of an Establishment, and that of an inferior discouraged Sect, is not yet quite worn out of *either*, as, perchance, in a little longer Tract of Time, may be the Case of *both* of them.

And now, Sir, give me leave to consider the Lives of Dissenters, which I promise you to do with all the Tenderness and Reserve that the Nature of my Design will permit. I can bear you record, that there are *many* like yourself, who are *in earnest* in Religion; and most of you, perhaps, have a *Zeal* for it, *of one sort or other*. I don't wonder at it; for few, besides such (as I intimated before) care to be of an underling Sect, and these, especially if they are Persons of some particular Complexions, run naturally into it; and the more, if it *be*, or rather *has lately*

lately been, in any degree, oppressed. This, indeed, is not *quite* your Case, now, in this Nation: You are upon a footing with the rest of his Majesty's Subjects, as to all worldly Advantages that I can think of, except your being excluded (*so far as the Laws can exclude you*) from public Trusts and Employments, (of which I have spoken already) and the Charge some of you are at to maintain your own Ministers; which, however, is but a Trifle, and made up to you abundantly by the mighty Advantages you reap from your firm, and almost *inviolable Attachment* to all the Secular Interests of each other: For this, Sir, is observed of you *all*, but of the Quakers above *all* others. A great Part of you, however most of the elder sort, if they are not *themselves* under any Oppression, are yet the Children of those who did undergo, it is true, some Inconveniences on a religious Account. And therefore, considering the many Lessons of Piety they are presumed to have had from their zealous Parents, may be justly expected to excel the Bulk and Generality of Churchmen, in the Goodness and Holiness of their Lives.

We should also consider, what Order of Men the main Body of Dissenters are composed of. Now, they are mostly found in Cities, and great Towns, among the trading Part of the People, not by reason (as, I think, Mr. *Peirce* has somewhere suggested) these, generally, are a more sensible Sort of People than those in the Villages, and capable of forming truer Notions of Religion, but because their Ministers have, for the most Part, taken Care to have their Residence, and to open their Churches, in those populous Places, where a greater Harvest might be reasonably expected. And these, being chiefly of the middle Ranks of Men, having *neither Poverty nor Riches*, are freer, as from the

Temptations, so from the Vices and Corruptions which usually attend those two Conditions. It is now a common Observation, that what little Religion there is among us is in the *Middle Region*, not among the Great and Honourable, Persons of Birth, and Quality, and great Estate, nor yet among the miserable Poor, but among those who, by Care and Industry, support themselves in a reasonable Degree of Plenty. And as it happens (through the Cause before-mentioned) that the Dissenters are chiefly of this Sort, so it would be a Wonder if they did not excel Churchmen, (who are as well of the highest and the lowest, as of the middle Class of Men) in their Regards to Religion, and the Regularity of their Lives and Conversations. And yet, after all, (excluding those whom I before excluded) the Difference is not, at present, *very great*, hardly *any*, so far as my Observation goes. And, whoever lives to see it, will probably find all Distinction between Churchmen and Dissenters, from their Lives, absolutely lost in another Generation, unless Persecution and Tribulation, which you plainly want as well as we, should arise, to stir up and re-kindle the Sparks of practical Religion and Goodness, which are ready to die away, both among *you* and *us*. The present State of Dissenters, I rather chuse to set forth in the Words of *your* Author, than in *my own*, as they may be more acceptable to *you*, and less liable to any *Charge* or *Suspicion* of undue Representation or Aggravation.

^a He plainly intimates, *You have laid aside some peculiar laudable Practices of your Ancestors, the ancient Non-conformists, whereby they had gained an honourable Character, and great Reputation in the Nation; that you, like others, too much indulge yourselves in,*

^a *Humble Attempt*, p. 227, &c.

and give a loose to the gayer Vanities, and all the perilous, if not unlawful Diversions of the Age; that you affect, like your Neighbours, all the Luxuries of Life, in your Dress and Furniture, Food, Equipage, and Attendance; whereby infamous Bankruptcies are become frequent among you, and hardly reckoned any Crime; and that, as to keeping regular Hours for the various Duties to God and Man, abstaining from vain Company, from Taverns, and public Houses, and much Wine, preserving better Order in Families, and maintaining the daily Worship of God there, there has been for the last Threescore or Fourscore Years, as great, or greater Degeneracy, in proportion, reigning and visible among you, than among your conforming Neighbours. These things, it is true, are delivered here and there, mostly in the Form of *Queries* put to your Consciences. But whoever understands the Force of Language, as this Gentleman does, (no body better, to be sure) must know, that *Queries* so put, are as strong, as plain and positive Assertions.

It is possible, Sir, such Circumstances and Considerations as the foregoing, might not be actually present to your Thoughts, before I had suggested them: But you have Discernment and Penetration enough to enter easily and thoroughly into them, which, I doubt, the greatest Part of Dissenters cannot do: They are used to look only on the Surface of Things; and because they see most of their Way keep the Lord's Day in a *severer* (I was going to say a more *Judaical*) manner, than many of those who go to the Churches do, they presently conclude their Lives are better in the whole; and hence are easily led to think of their Religion more highly than they ought to think. I will therefore suppose, for Argument's sake, that they *do* live better Lives than we, as much better as you please; and see whether

whether any Conclusion can fairly be drawn from thence, in favour of *your Churches*.

I must say, if this Principle, *The better Life always the better Religion*, be true, it is a most useful one; not less useful than the Doctrine of implicit Faith among the Papists: For as *that* Doctrine, thoroughly imbibed, saves *them* abundance of Trouble, in examining the several Doctrines of Religion, so *this* will save *us* as much, in trying the Merits of the several Parties in Religion, in order to determine ourselves which of them to be of. If it be true, what have we (Fools!) been doing, one Party of Christians against another, for so many Centuries of Years? Some of us have been disputing, and writing Books of Controversy, and the whole World will hardly contain them. We have been proving, each of us, from Scripture, Reason, Antiquity, and I know not what Topics besides, that our own Religion is the best; and we are now (for what I can see) no nearer an end of these Controversies than at the beginning. Others have been as much employed in reading the Books that have been written, and scrutinizing the Religions that have been offered to them, have gone from Sect to Sect, in order to prove all things, but have never been able to hold fast any thing, to fix and settle all their Lives long; or if they have settled, it has often been in the most *wrong* way they could have taken: Whereas, here is a short and compendious Way we have at last hit upon, to be *presently* and *certainly* in the right. We need only lie by a while, watching the Lives and Manners of the several Churches or Sects in Religion, to see which are best, and then choose our Religion accordingly.

This way to find out the true Church and Religion is so easy and convenient, that, methinks, one is strangely prejudiced in its Favour, and cannot

not help wishing it were the *right* and *safe* Way to bring us to it. But alas! Sir, alas! we cannot open our Eyes, without seeing it is *wrong*, and will *mislead* us: For do you not see, all about you, how little the Lives of Men correspond and agree with their Religion; that some live *better*, who have a *worse* Religion, and some again *worse*, who have a *better*? Are not the *Lives* of Quakers (for example) in your own Opinion, as innocent and inoffensive, and every way as good as those of other Dissenters, particularly those of your *own* Denomination? But you don't think their *Religion* so good by a great deal. I suppose you think them better than those of Churchmen: But do you hold their Religion to be better, and to come nearer true and genuine Christianity? I question that very much; nay, I am pretty confident of the contrary, and that, were you to quit your own Religion, or could you have no Opportunity for the Exercise of it, and *must be* either Churchman or Quaker, you would certainly choose, without the least Scruple, or one Moment's hesitating, to be the Churchman. It is commonly said, that the *Lives* of Protestants are by no means answerable to the *Power* and *Purity* of their *Principles*, and those who know the World have thought, they are but little, if any thing, better, (taking them altogether) than those of Papists. Nay, in the very Infancy of the Reformation, some of the Reformers did not scruple to pronounce and describe them *worse*: Though I own too, the Complaints of pious and zealous Men of the Wickedness of those under their Charge, in order to reform them, are not always *historically just*, but rather declamatory aggravated Descriptions, not to be interpreted too strictly. Their Time and Zeal for many Years, were wholly employed in reforming the *Doctrines* of the Church, and they were not at
leisure

leisure to mind the *Discipline* thereof, and the *Manners* of the People. And therefore, I imagine, they were, *then*, and perhaps have been *ever since*, pretty much like those of their Popish Neighbours. And yet, we are all agreed, there is a vast Difference, in Point of Purity and Goodness, between the Religion of Papists and of Protestants, even that of the Church of *England*, as much Malevolence as some of you have against it. And if, from *Sects* and *Societies* of Christians, we should come to *particular* Persons, (and why should we not?) some we shall find, within the Pale of the *same* Church, taught and believing the *same* Doctrines, and partaking of the *same* Ordinances, excellently good and holy Men, while others are void of all Holiness, and perhaps, unholy and profane. — In a word, were we to chuse our Religion by examining, not the Doctrines and Practices thereof, but the Lives of its Professors, we should be soon in a Maze, and in danger of falling into the grossest Errors. And, truly, I don't know but a less stedfast and sincere Christian than yourself might be in some danger of losing his very Christianity.

For yourself, Sir, I am satisfied you are a Christian upon thorough Conviction, and that nothing can move you from the Faith of the Gospel, and your blessed Hope in the Lord *Jesus*. But suppose you were not so good a Christian as you are, suppose you were hanging in a State of Suspense, or of Neutrality and Indifference about Religion, and had your own yet to seek, God above knows, whither this Principle, if your Mind were thoroughly possessed with it, might carry you. If you had lived in *India* in the Days of the old *Gymnosophists*, or in *Gaul* and *Britain* in the Days of our *Druids*, you might have been easily drawn in to their Superstitions and Idolatries, by your Ad-
miration

miration of their Lives, and their continual Contemplation of Divine Things. If you were now in *China* or *Japan*, the Contenance and Sobriety of the *Bonzes* might induce you to entertain a good Opinion of their God *Fo*; or if in *Siam*, the more exemplary Lives of the *Talapoins* there, their perpetual Silence, refraining from public Spectacles and Diversions, Watchings and Fastings, with other Rigours and Austerities practised upon their Bodies, their Temperance and Chastity, their Contempt of the World, and their continual preaching from Morning to Night, would probably convince you the true Religion was with *them*, and make you a devout Worshipper of *Sommonokbodom*. But, if these Suppositions are too odious, I will suppose you a Christian of the Apostles Days; and then, in all probability, you would have sided with those who *forbad to marry, and commanded to abstain from Meats*, and thought the Apostles themselves took and gave more Liberty than they ought, and walked too much according to the Flesh. If you had been a Christian of the primitive Times, it is ten to one but you would have renounced the Communion of the Catholic Church, and been a *Montanist*, an *Encratite*, a *Priscilianist*, or one of those other Hereticks, who insulted the Church for its Want of Discipline, and the Members of it for their want of Strictness and Purity of Life, and, to say Truth, did *really outdo* them, in *Strictness of all sorts*, more than any of *you* can pretend to outdo *us* of the Church of *England*. And truly, Sir, I have somewhat wondered that, considering the Road of Thinking you are in, you have not yet gone over to some other Sect, that is more refined and spiritual than your own. Pardon me, Sir, if I speak freely to you upon this Occasion: I am somewhat jealous

lous over you, lest, as you think the Truth and Goodness of any Religion is to be estimated by the Goodness and Spirituality of its Professors, you should be inclined to leave your *present* Way, and to embrace the *Methodism* of Mr. *Whitfield*, which I think *worse*: For *he* and his Associates *do* certainly preach up, and pretend to *praise*, greater Spiritualities and Abstractions from the World, than those of *your* Way do. Perhaps, you may think those extraordinary things which they pretend to, such as wholly abstaining from indifferent things as unlawful, renouncing the common Enjoyments of the World, the irrational Liberalities to the Poor, which they so much cry up, and leaving their Stations in the World to follow, every where, the Preachers of these high-strained Doctrines, are no Parts of Christian Holiness. I readily grant you they are *not*: But then, you may please to consider, whether *some* things, whereby *your* People have gained the Character of extraordinary Sanctity above their Neighbours, and particularly, that over-rigorous and precise Way of keeping the Lord's Day, which *many* of you affect, be any *Parts* of the Holiness of a Christian, or only the *Guises* and *Semblances* thereof. And I should think you might as easily mistake some of *his* Instances of *Over-righteousness*, for *real Holiness*, as *that* I have just now mentioned. And indeed, this is certain, that those who measure the Goodness of all Religions by the Goodness of those who profess them, are always exceedingly apt to mistake such things for Christian Holiness, and have commonly done it. And that Mistake has been the Occasion of many a Schism in the Church.

This was one of the Causes (as I intimated in the beginning of my Letter) of the great Increase and multiplying of Sects, when the Church of *England* was removed, in the Days of our Forefathers.

And

And some of *your* Writers, particularly old Mr. Baxter, whom I mention, because I know you have a great Regard for his Judgment and Authority, as well as Reverence for his Memory, saw this, and endeavoured to guard People against it. Though, by the way too, you will allow me to say, no body, in the Days of Prelacy, *strove* more than he, or *contributed* more to draw them away from the Church, by declaiming against the Looseness and Dissoluteness of its Members, and magnifying the Godliness of the Sectaries. However, *afterwards*, when he found this way of thinking and talking turned against himself and his own Party, to make further Divisions and Subdivisions from it, he quickly came into more reasonable and sober Sentiments. Then he set up for *curing* the Divisions of the Church: And one of the *Cures* he^a prescribes, is, *to take heed, lest you be tempted to reject a good Cause, because it is owned by some bad Persons; or to like a bad Cause, when it is owned by Men that are otherwise good; and that you judge not of the Faith and Cause by the Persons, when you should judge of the Persons rather by the Faith and Cause.* He does not dispute, but that great numbers of the best sort of Men *may be*, and frequently *are*, in great Errors: *For it often falls out* (says he) *that honest People are like straying Sheep; if one leaps over the Hedge, the rest strive to follow.* And, on the other side, *the worst sort of Men often hold fast the Truth.* And he shews, from the common Workings of human Nature, how it comes to be so. Some stand up for the Truth, because it is the Religion of their *King and Country.* Some make it a *Point of Honour* (a mistaken Point of Honour, I confess) not to depart from it, because

* *Cure of Church Divisions*, Direct. 43.

it was *the Religion of their Forefathers*, and what they had the good Luck to be brought up in. Some again stick to it for the Peace and Quiet of their Consciences, which, though none of the best, cannot, perhaps, brook an Opposition to, or Departure from it, when it is known and manifest. Others defend it, as it gives them an Opportunity to display their *Wit* and *Learning*. And there are those, doubtless, who defend it, that they may have it to throw in the Teeth of those, to disgrace and lessen them, who, otherwise, are better Men than themselves, but happen in that Point, to be erroneous.—See, Sir, how many Reasons there are in human Nature, were we to go no farther, for *bad Mens* adhering, as they often do, to the *best Religion*. And *some* of these Reasons, or, at least, *all together*, I should hope, might fairly account, with you, for such Mens living in the Communion of the Church, and being zealous for it, without any Disgrace to the Church itself, and without any Occasion given for our being put in Mind that *the Tree is known by its Fruits*.

I mention now, Sir, that *Aphorism* of our Lord, because, I remember, you were pleased to apply it, as I have heard others do, to this Subject; and I *then* neglected, I know not how, to say any thing to it.—Yes, Sir, our Lord does say, and he had it often in his Mouth, that *the Tree is known by its Fruits*. False Prophets, he says, are known by their Fruits; and false Churches, say I, are known by *theirs*. But what are those Fruits? Perhaps you will say, it cannot be their Doctrines, because their Doctrines are the things we are to judge *of*, not the things we are to judge *by*. But there is no Absurdity, that I can see, in judging *of some by others*; of those Doctrines which they openly profess and publickly avow, and which they,

they, *at first*, propose to you to bring you over to, *by* those (generally more mischievous) which they *afterwards* labour to infuse into you, but would not venture to trust you with, till they had got you in their Power, and made sure of you: A common Way (they say) of dealing with new Converts in the Church of *Rome*. Or, perhaps, by the *Fruits* we are to know them by, our Saviour means the *Views* with which they propagate their Doctrines (which, if you wait a while, or watch them narrowly, will plainly appear) and the Uses to which they, *afterwards*, apply them; such (for instance) as getting a Power over the Consciences of the People, keeping them in a slavish Subjection to themselves, or preparing them for any mischievous or rebellious Enterprize; or else, filling their own Pockets, enriching their Church, and promoting the Ends of worldly Greatness and Dominion. But if you still insist they are the Actions of their Lives that are here meant, I shall not contend with you, provided you mean such Actions, as the Principles and Doctrines they teach *naturally* tend to, and have a *direct Influence* to produce. But if you mean other Actions which those Principles and Doctrines have no Tendency to, or Influence upon, they are not the Fruits which our Saviour means the Tree was to be known by. By such Actions you can no more know what their Religion is, whether good or bad, than you can know the Goodness of any Tree in your Garden, by observing the Fruit of an Ivy that happens to twine about it. If (for Example) a Papist assassinates his natural and lawful Prince, being a Protestant, that Act of his is such as his Religion may be known by, because his Religion *excites* him to, and *warrants* him to do it. But if he picks your Pocket, steals out of your House, or robs you upon the Highway,

those Acts are not the Fruits whereby his Religion can be known, because, bad as it is, it encourages nothing, that I know of, of that Nature.

You will permit me, Sir, to pursue our Saviour's Similitude a little farther, in hopes of deriving somewhat more Light upon this Subject. He certainly means no more, because no more is true, than that a good Tree will bring forth good Fruit, *if nothing external hinders*; for otherwise, it may produce very bad, or none at all. Be it ever so good in its own Nature, the very best *sui generis*, if it be planted after a wrong manner, in an improper Soil, or an unfriendly Climate, there may be no Fruit, or what is may be very poor and bad, or some accidental Blaft coming upon it may destroy it all in the Blossom. In like manner, the best Religion will infallibly produce the best Practice, when there is nothing to *obstruct* its Operation. But Circumstances often keep it from doing so. Custom, Education, natural Complexion, and other things, hinder its Effect, on particular Persons. And, with regard to whole Churches, the particular Situations they may be placed in, such as Security or Danger, Prosperity or Adversity, a peaceful or troubled State of public Affairs, the good or the bad Examples of Princes and great Men, and many other things of a like nature, will always hinder or promote the Efficacy of its Doctrines upon the Lives of Men. And, therefore, you see, that, under the same Constitution of Religion, under the Profession of the same Doctrines and Opinions, People, in different Times and Places, live very differently, *now*, or *here*, in a more loose and dissolute, *then*, or *there*, in a stricter manner, as these Circumstances happen to influence and determine. Nay, it is sometimes seen, that Religion, in a very corrupt and degenerate State, where all Circumstances of this Nature are
very

very favourable to its Interests, produces as great Effects, and makes Men live as virtuously, and perhaps, more so, than it does under such Circumstances as are unfavourable to it, where it is professed in much greater Purity.

After all, Sir, I would not be thought universally to assert, that the Goodness or Badness of Mens Lives is a Matter of no Consideration at all, in making a Judgment concerning the Truth or Goodness of any Religion. I allow it to have Place, and to be also of considerable Weight in the Question between Christianity and other Religions *fundamentally false*, as the *Mahometan*, and much more the *Pagan*, in its various Forms and Shapes. There is not only a *visible*, but a *great* Difference between the Lives of Christians, and of the Professors of those Religions, much to the Honour of Christendom, whatever some devout and well-meaning Christians, while they were only *declaiming*, and not speaking *critically* of Things, have *incautiously* said, or some of our Infidels have *silly* and *maliciously* pretended to the contrary. For not only the Bulk and Generality of Christians are much freer from all gross Vices and shameful Enormities, but vast Multitudes of them, even in these Days, degenerate as they are, have, by the Power and Efficacy of the Christian Doctrine (for what else should it be done by?) been raised to such a Perfection of Holiness, as, I am pretty sure, none of the other sort ever attained to, or, perhaps, have had any notion of. And this, I readily grant you, is a legitimate Presumption, if it be nothing more, that the *Gospel of Christ is the Word of God, and the Power of God unto Salvation*: And if your Faith in it has been hereby established and confirmed, as mine, I am free to profess to you, has greatly been, you need not, I think, be ashamed. But then, Sir, I

can never admit, that the Merits of the different Sects and Denominations of Christians, all holding the Head, and agreeing in Fundamentals, can be rationally estimated this Way. The great Principles of Natural Religion, and those of the Gospel Dispensation, are the Things whereby, in the main, our Lives are formed and fashioned; and these, we may reasonably expect, will operate in an *uniform* and *equal* Manner, and have an Effect *pretty nigh the same* in Christians of all sorts, who do sincerely and cordially embrace them; and the external Forms they disagree in, are not like to make any Difference that is considerable. Nay, Sir, I will venture to say, that where the great Principles of our holy Religion have been mixed and adulterated with many impure and pernicious Doctrines, as they have been in the Church of *Rome*, their Influence has not been weakened thereby in any such degree as will easily fall under common Notice and Observation. Whether the Members of that Church do not commonly *discern* the Genius and Tendency of their *peculiar* Doctrines; or whether, *discerning* it, they are not, by the superior and over-ruling Influence of the great Articles of Faith, which they embrace and profess in common with us, kept from pursuing it in their Practice; or whether they are not happy above *us* in some Circumstances, whereby the evil Tendency of their peculiar Doctrines may, in a good measure, be counter-balanced; what ever be the Reason, there is not, so far as appears to me, in *their* Lives and *ours*, or indeed those of any Sort of Christians we are acquainted with, any such Difference as that an Argument can be rationally grounded upon it, in behalf of *one* against *another*. And where, in the Variety of Sects, there is a plain and discernible Difference, it will never be, I am fully persuaded, found greater, than may

be accounted for, by surveying the *Circumstances* and *State of Things* they live respectively under, such as those I have been just now pointing out to you.

And now, I hope, it appears, that this Principle, *That is the best Religion, or Way of Religion, the Professors of which live best*, which is of such favourite Consideration with you, is absolutely false. And, though I am persuaded there is no need to say any thing more, yet one thing I cannot refrain from saying, to put you farther out of Conceit with it. Sir, it is a pitiful Piece of Popery. You will find it in *Bellarmino*, and other Popish Writers. It is the same thing, in other Words, with one of his *Notes* of the true Church. *Sanctity of Life*, according to him, is an *infallible Mark*, whereby the *true Church* is to be known. And he bears you in Hand, this Mark is only to be found upon his *own*. The Emissaries also, of that Church never fail to employ it to make Proselytes among us. They are evermore magnifying the *Prayers* and *Devotions*, the *Watchings*, the *Fastings*, the *Mortifications*, the *Charities*, and the *Contempt of the World*, which so many Men and Women, in *their* Church, have been eminent for; and this is one of the surest Baits those *Fishers of Men* have to catch Protestants. And, therefore, I hope we shall at length be wiser than to use, and, by using, *authorize* and *give credit* to an Argument, which has been so often, and so successfully turned against ourselves.

I heartily wish, Sir, as I am confident you also do, that this Mark of Sanctity may be more visible than it is on *their*, and *all* the Churches of God; *that they may all be so guided and governed by his good Spirit, that all who profess, and call themselves Christians, may be led into the Way of Truth, and hold the Faith in the Unity of the Spirit, in the Bond of*

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Peace, and in Righteousness of Life. And as to yourself, Sir, I should esteem it, I do assure you, no inconsiderable Article in the Happiness of my Life, could I be a Means of leading you to act according to the whole Tenor of those good Words in the Prayers of our Church which we offer up daily in your Behalf; I mean, could I prevail with you to hold the Faith, in the Unity of the Spirit, and the Bond of Peace, as you do in Righteousness of Life already.

I am,

S I R,

Your Humble Servant.

A SECOND
L E T T E R

To a Gentleman dissenting from the
CHURCH of *ENGLAND*;

WHEREIN

The great and popular Pleas of Dissenters
against Communion with the Church are
refuted, and reflected back upon them-
selves.

By JOHN WHITE, B. D.

Sometime Fellow of St. *John's* College, *Cambridge*.

Ex ore tuo —

*Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that
Thing which he alloweth. Rom. xiv. 22.*

The Third Edition, with Additions and Emendations.

L O N D O N,

Printed for C. DAVIS, against *Gray's Inn*, *Holbourn*,
and W. CRAIGHTON at *Ipswich*.

MDCCLXVIII.

THE SECOND

LETTER

TO A GENTLEMAN DIFFERING FROM THE
CHURCH OF ENGLAND;

WHEREIN

The great and popular Pleas of Dissenters
against Communion with the Church are
referred, and reflected back upon them-
selves.

By JOHN WHITE, B. D.

Serjeant Fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge.

It is not possible to be in the Church and yet
to be in the world. It is not possible to be in the
world and yet to be in the Church.

The Third Edition, with Additions and Amendments.

L O N D O N.

Printed for C. Davis, against Gray's Inn, Holborn,
and W. Grayson at York.

MDCCLXXII

PREFACE.

THERE being no greater Impropriety that I can perceive in introducing a *Letter*, than a general Discourse, with a *Preface*, especially a *long Letter* with a *short Preface*, I shall no more scruple to introduce *this*, than I did the *former*, in that Manner. — The Title Page intimates, that it is both *defensive* and *offensive*. In the defensive Part, wherein I undertake to vindicate the Establish'd Church against the great and popular Objections of Dissenters, I

am generally brief, *that* having already been executed by much abler Pens, and particularly, by the *London Divines* in the *Collection of Cases and other Discourses to recover Dissenters to the Communion of the Church of England*. But in the other Part, wherein I *retort* their Objections, and shew them as strongly conclusive against Communion with *their own Churches*, I have enlarged more; few, I think, if any, at least professedly, and in a set Treatise, having gone before me in *that* way. The turning thus *their Artillery upon their own Heads*, will be allowed, I suppose, fair War, a justifiable and reasonable Treatment of an Adversary, and, perhaps, is the right way of treating those we have to do with, although, hitherto, in my humble

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P R E F A C E.

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Opinion, too much neglected by our Writers. When we urge them with Scripture, they find ways to darken and pervert it; and when with Reasoning, they make a Shift, to oppose ours with some Counter-reasonings of their own, which, however deceitful or inconclusive, may pass, and fatally impose upon the weak, or the unattentive. But when they are plainly shewn to have in *their* Churches the same Blemishes or Defects with which they upbraid ours, and to do the same Things, or Things tantamount with those for which they profess to withdraw themselves from its Communion, they must be very obstinate and perverse, if they are not taken down, and put effectually to Silence.

It might be, perhaps, worth one's while to take some Pains upon this

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Argument, if it were only to embarrass them, and stop their Mouths, and keep them, in time to come, from attacking the Church with these Objections in so *triumphant* a Manner as they are wont to do. But I had a farther and more important View in it, namely, to set before them *a plain Argument for Conformity, which has, hitherto, been very little, if at all, pressed upon them.* For if all our Churches are alike or equally faulty and defective, why should they make it a greater Difficulty to conform to the Established, than to any other? Nay, in this Case, it will be their Duty to conform rather to the Church established by Law, and the general National Religion, than, in manifest Violation of all the Laws of Christian Communion, to join themselves to any

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PREFACE

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small tolerated Sect, formed and set up in open Rivalship and Opposition to it; and no other Conduct can be esteemed either *Rational* or *Christian*.

I am very sensible, such an Attempt as the present is liable to be construed, as if it were a Charge of, and a Design to expose their want of Honesty and Sincerity. But there is no necessity for such a Construction. I am free to own, many of their Inconsistencies and Self-condemnations here discovered, and, perhaps, most of them, may be charitably accounted for by the want only of common Attention and Reflection. But if *this* Charge or Imputation be also esteemed disobliging, I can't help it. Thus much, however, I can say, some Care has been
taken

taken that it might not be made *more*
disobliging than it is in itself, by my
 manner of pursuing it.

I am very sensible, such an Attempt
 as the present is liable to be construed
 as if it were a Charge of, and a De-
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 want of a common Attention and
 Reflection. But if the Charge of
 Dissimulation be also esteemed disob-
 liging, I can't help it. Thus much,
 I can say, some Care has been
 taken

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A SECOND
LETTER,
CONCERNING

The Popular Pleas of DISSENTERS.

SIR,

ALTHOUGH I knew you too well, to entertain the least doubt of your taking in good Part my sincere and well-meant Endeavours, in my former Letter, to serve you in your highest Interest, I yet found it a very sensible Pleasure to be assured of it from yourself. And what added much to my Pleasure, was, your free and ingenuous Confession, that, tho' I was not so fortunate, as to give you entire Satisfaction in every Point I had occasion to touch upon, yet I had done it in some, and particularly, had extorted from you your old Prejudice, which always hung about you, and you had been extremely fond of; to wit, that *that Religion is to be always esteemed best, the Professors of which are observed to live best, and to be most sober, regular, and exemplary in their Conversations.* This, thought I to myself, is a very material Point gained; and I was sanguine enough to expect you would have presently declared for Conformity. But these Expectations were soon damp'd, upon your further saying, that *tho' the better Lives of Dissenters had greatly confirmed you in your Non-conformity, more, indeed, than you now perceive there was Reason for, they never had been the sole Ground*

or Reason of it; but that the Exceptions against Conformity commonly urged by your Writers, tho', indeed, they did not appear to you to prove it sinful, yet seemed weighty enough to determine you against it, especially, when there were other Churches you might communicate withal, which were not liable to those Exceptions, but that, if it could be shewn, the Dissenting Churches were really liable to the same, or the like Exceptions, and your Reasons against Conformity to the Established Church could be fairly thrown back upon your own, you should then think it your Duty, in regard to the Peace of God's Church, to conform rather to the national Establishment, than to join with any separate Congregation; and that, in such a Case, you would certainly do it. This Declaration raised me again; and indeed is the thing which has drawn upon you this second Trouble.

It falls out, Sir, that some Thoughts I had published, Years ago, in three or four loose Papers, might, in some Measure, answer the present Occasion, the Drift of those Papers being to shew, in divers Particulars, that your Reasons against Conformity to the Church equally press upon yourselves! But, as they were hastily drawn up, for the Amusement of a Day, I shall not put them into your Hands, but take the Liberty, which, I think, I have a Right to do, and, for your Sake, the Trouble, to digest them a-new, to make many Alterations, which, I hope, will not be for the worse, as well as Additions to what was then published. And, upon a Review of the Thoughts which lie before me, I plainly foresee, some of these will be so large, that the Original Writing will be the least Part by far, of what I now send you. I hope they will not swell it to a Bulk, that may discourage you from going through with it. And lest they should, I promise to contract my Thoughts, as much as may be, consistently

assiduously with doing Justice to my Subject, and shall address myself to the Business of it without more Ceremony. For by this Time, Sir, I should hope, you are so well satisfied of the Cordiality of my Friendship and Esteem for you, that a great deal of Form and Ceremony between us will be no longer necessary.

What I have then to do is, in the first Place, to offer to your serious Consideration, some Things by way of *direct Defence* of the Church of England against your great and popular Objections; and, more particularly those, which you was pleased to hint to me. And because within the Compass I have proposed to take, (especially too having already promised you all possible and convenient Conciseness) there will hardly be room to say all that might be properly and usefully said upon each Subject, I shall avoid, as much as may be, (tho' it may not be *always* convenient, for good old Arguments are not the worse for wearing) *trite Things*, and such as you every where meet with; which, I hope, however, will not betray me (tho' I am well aware, that is but too natural) to take up with Things that are less solid. And, lest I should be thought to fail in this Attempt, that is, not be able to shew, *to your Satisfaction*, that all your Objections to the Church are weak and groundless, or not weighty enough to justify your withdrawing from its Communion, I will try, under each Head, to shew, as a *Succedaneum*, that the Objection, supposing there *be* any Strength in it, is equally strong against *your own Churches*: And if I should be so happy, as to make you sensible of this, which, I own, I have great Hopes of doing, (for you must, I should think, of yourself, have been sensible of it, if you had only *betought* yourself of making a few easy and natural Reflections, upon what you perfectly

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fectly well know) you will then, I hope, give me Leave to claim the Performance of your Promise, of joining rather with the *established*, than the *dissenting* Churches, both being found alike faulty, if either of them are so.

In the Execution of the last mentioned Part, more especially, of my Design, I am very sensible it will behove me to walk with a good deal of Wariness and Circumspection, not only because my way is, in a manner, untrodden, but also, because I am to walk almost without Light. To be plainer, Sir, your Churches are so secret in all their Ways, that there is scarce any knowing what they are; but to find them out, we must grope and feel for them, as in the Dark. The Church of *England* acts herein more openly: Every Part of her Government, Discipline, and Worship is exposed to the View, the Attacks, and Insults of her Adversaries. They have the whole Book of *Common Prayer*, and Administration of the Sacraments, and other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church, with all the *Rubrics, Prefaces, Rules and Orders* concerning the Service thereof, (*not excepting the Table to find Easter for ever*) all the *Injunctions, Ordinances, Canons and Constitutions Ecclesiastical*, and even the *Common and Statute Law*, so far as concerns Ecclesiastical Matters, to canvass and cavil at: While your Churches, having no common Rules of Discipline or Worship, which you hold yourselves obliged to walk by, or, if you have any, not having made them public, and laid them before the World, for our Examination and Discussion, cannot be easily attack'd upon those Heads. And this, as I intimated before, makes the Task I have undertaken so difficult; and, indeed, is no small Disadvantage that most Writers, on the Side of the Church, lie under. Upon this Footing, I often think a Controversy with you is some-

something like fighting with a Ghost, which has nothing one can level a Blow at, and make any Impression upon. Hence it is that, in our Controversies, the first Attack has been commonly from *you*, and *we* have been forced to be *almost always* on the *defensive* Side; and this, I dare say, has made many judge, it is agreed between us, that the Order and Worship of *your* Churches is every way *right*; and the only Controversy is, Whether those of *our* Church are defensible, or not: Whereas, if the *Rules and Orders* (in case you have any) or, for want of these, if but the *Acts* of your Churches, and your general *Dealings* with your People, nay, if only the Prayers that are offered up in all your Congregations, tho' but on one Lord's Day in the Year, and the precise manner wherein the Sacraments are administered among *you*, were but as public, and in every Body's Hands, as *ours* are, I am ready to think your Ministers would have Employment enough to *defend* their *own*, and not much Leisure to *insult* *our* Quarters.

These Things, Sir, concerning the Variety and Difformity of your Ways, and the Difficulty of coming at any certain Knowledge of many of them, for want of public, authentic *Rules and Ordinances* about them, and, I add now, by reason of the general Shyness of your People of revealing and disclosing them to *us* (for that, I assure you, is a Thing much taken Notice of) these Things, I say, I thought it proper to premise, that you might not expect from me a fuller and more complete Discovery of all your Ways and Practices, than you reasonably ought, and that, if I should mistake any of them, I might be the more easily forgiven, or my Correction be the more gentle. I will promise you to take (as well for the Sake of doing *you* Justice, as in regard to my Argument) as much Care as I can,

can, not to mistake your Principles or Practices, or the State and Constitution of your Churches, and hope I shall not do it in any material Thing. And if my Discoveries thereof are few and defective, (which, as I never have been in your Secret, they are too like to be) I must crave, Sir, your own Assistance, who, to be sure, can be no Stranger to any of the Ways of your own Churches, to supply what is wanting. And I flatter myself, that, between *my own* Observations and Reflections, and *your* more certain and intimate *Knowledge* of Things, we shall be able to *make up* such Evidence, as will be to you *satisfactory*, entirely convince you of the Faultiness of your own Churches, in those very Things for which ours has been condemned by you, and give, in the End, such an happy Determination to your Thoughts and Resolutions, as may be for your own Peace, at the same Time it promotes that of God's holy Church.

It is, Sir, you know, one of the favourite and fundamental Principles of the Dissention, that, by the Rule and Order of the Gospel, every Lay-christian has a Right to chuse his own Pastor: They pretend to maintain, that it is this Choice that constitutes the Relation between Pastor and People; which therefore, without it, would be none at all. And hence it comes to be esteemed a just Ground of Separation: So holds Dr. *Owen*, so Mr. *Baxter*, and so an hundred more. The Insufficiency of this Plea will be shewn by and by; and, in the mean while, I will only observe, that it is odious to be suggested, because it declares against Communion with all other Protestant established Churches, as well as ours, even the Church of *Scotland* itself, where the vacant Churches are filled, as here, by their proper Patrons.

This divine and unalienable Right, as it is said to be, is pretended to be founded, (1.) Upon certain Precepts,

Precepts, Cautions or Advices in the holy Scriptures, which are thought to imply it: (2.) Upon some Instances wherein it is supposed to be used and exercised; and, (3.) Upon the plain Reason of the Thing. The first are such as these—*Take heed how you bear—Beware of false Prophets—Beware of the Concision—A Man that is an Heretick avoid—I beseech you, Brethren, mark them which cause Divisions and Offences, contrary to the Doctrine which ye have learnt, and avoid them—*So then, because Christians are admonished to remember, and make good Use of the Instructions they receive, that they may not fail of their due Effects, because they are bid to beware of the Wiles and Delusions, of Impostors, who will come to them with mighty Shews of Piety, and specious Appearances of great Humility and Innocence; because such as corrupt the Faith of the Gospel, or make Schisms in the Church, are to be avoided by the People; therefore they must have no Pastors but of their own chusing, and need not receive any, be they ever so orthodox and able, and behave themselves ever so peaceably and inoffensively *in the House of God*, whom the King or Bishop, or any Patron whatever, shall be legally entitled to send to them. This, sure, is no Argument; and Scripture-evidence must run very low, when such Evidence as this is taken up with. I have read, I suppose, those Passages more than an hundred Times, without once thinking of the Right of each Congregation to chuse its own Pastor. And now it is suggested I am not able, I own, to perceive any Sort of Connexion between *them* and *it*. Can you, Sir, think it a likely Thing, that our Lord and his Apostle had, in those Cautions, any View to our *Parochial* or *Congregational* Elections? For my Part, I could be well enough content, and al-

* Baxter's *Answer to Dean Stillingfleet's*, &c. p. 136.

most wish they were to be taken in such a View: For what would the Cause of the Church lose? What would that of the Dissension gain by it? In that Case, the Choice would be limited to those who were sound in the Faith, and in the Unity of the Church: And then, Sir, give me Leave to ask, what would become of the Dissenting Ministers? All Leaders, both in Heresy and Schism, are declared unfit, unqualified Persons, and utterly incapable of being chosen. The Faithful, far from permitted to enter into any *Pastoral Relation* to them, (much less preferably to others) are not permitted to have any *Christian Communion* with them, no, not so much as any *intimate unnecessary Acquaintance* and Familiarity with them in common Life. And I wish the Ministers, who are the unhappy Causes of such woeful Divisions and Offences, and you of the Laity both, (for it greatly concerns you) would lay this seriously to heart.

(2.) The Scripture Precedents and Examples in Support of the Right pretended to, are alledged with equal Futility and Impertinence. The Election or Call of *Matthias* to the Apostolate, in the room of *Judas*, and the Share the People had (if indeed they had any) therein, and that of the seven Deacons, come not up to the Point. In the former Case, the Election was evidently made by God, nor was *Matthias* elected *their* Apostle, or had to *them* any Relation more than the other Apostles had, and much less such as the Pastors of particular Congregations now among us, have to *their* Flocks. And the same may be said of the seven Deacons. They were but presented, or recommended by the Brethren, as Men of honest Report, and not *that* to the pastoral Charge of so many Churches or Congregations, but to the Management of the common Stock. These Instances, then, are by no means
pertinent

pertinent to, nor will affect the Merits of the Question now before us. And, indeed, in vain shall we look (as any one may well think) for Instances of Congregational Elections of their own peculiar Pastors, in Scripture Times, and those presently succeeding, when every Body knows, the Christian People were not distributed and cantoned into distinct Parishes and separate Congregations, each subjected to its own proper Pastor, but were attended by the Clergy, either in common, or by Turns, or in such other Order and Method, as the Bishops, their Superiors, in their Prudence, should appoint and direct.

But (3.) If Scripture Evidence fails us, and there be found there, no Proof of *Right* in the Christian People to chuse their own Pastors, is there not, I expect you will ask, a great deal of *Reason* in the Thing? Has not every Man a *Right*, and is he not *bound*, indeed, to take Care of his Soul? Sir, no body denies it. But we think, nevertheless, a Man provides very well for his Soul, who submits himself to, who hears and regards with meek Heart, and pure Affection, the Instructions, and who devoutly attends all the Administrations of an able and orthodox Minister, by whomsoever he be provided. It will be confessed, I suppose, that the King and Bishops, the two Universities, the Lord High Chancellor, the Nobility and Gentry, who are our great Patrons, are more competent Judges of both the Abilities, and Orthodoxy of Clergymen, and of the Fitness of each for that particular Station, or Preferment he is designed for, than the common Run of Men, especially the Vulgar (if indeed these are to be distinguished) whose greatest Favourites, and most admired Ministers are, generally, Men of more Sound than Solidity; neither can I see any great Reason why we may not expect, that Clergy-

men of regular, and exemplary Lives, should be preferred by *them*, as that *such* should be chosen by the *Populace*. I observe indeed, Mr. *Baxter*, arguing against us upon this Head, says plainly, *few of the Rich and great are good*, but most of them vicious and profligate, and remarks thereupon, that *all Things are apt to generate their like*. Well! be it so; the Nobility and Gentry, we will, at present, suppose, if you please, are too apt to prefer such Clergymen, as are likest themselves, and somewhat tainted with *their Vices*. Are not the Multitude, the low Vulgar (for so, I doubt, the Majority of most Congregations, Non-conformists as well as Conformists, may not improperly be called) apt also to do the like? No, says, Mr. *Baxter*, *It is known by Experience, that Learning and great Worth, does, as Light, so reveal itself to human Nature, that usually most of those who are loth to be holy themselves would have a Saint, and an able Man for their Minister*. To be sure, he is right; but how comes it, then, about, that this is true only of Congregational Electors, but not of Patrons? What is the Matter, that these naturally *generate their like*, (if I may be pardoned from being so free with his Expression) and always affect to promote worthless Clergymen, while the other are altogether for Saints, and Scholars? I must desire, Sir, the Nobility, and you of the Gentry, may have the Benefit of this Observation, as well as the common People. I hope you are as well, if not somewhat better entitled to it. Learning and great Worth, I should think, would as soon, like Light, reveal itself to an *English* Nobleman, or Gentleman, as to a common Tradesman or Mechanic: For it is not the Nature of this Light, to shew itself most to those who are in the Dark. Those who have generally a polite and liberal Education, and may be presumed to have

Sense and Understanding corresponding with it, are as like, to my thinking, *to discern real Worth*, to be charmed with it, and reward it, as the more illiterate and uneducated. And methinks too, they would be *as much*, not to say *more* ashamed of making an unworthy and scandalous Choice; for such a Choice will either discover they want Sense to distinguish a *worthy* from an *unworthy* Clergyman, or else, that they are so abandoned as to prefer, knowingly, an unworthy one, which is a wilful and shameful betraying their sacred Trust, not very consistent with *nice Honour*. And the Shame of it too, will be *all their own*, whereas, the Shame of such a Choice, when it comes to be divided amongst a Multitude, is just nothing.

But suppose such a Choice happens to be made, and a Clergyman, against whom there lies any just Exception, comes to be promoted to a Parochial Cure of Souls, the Parishioners, there, are in no worse Condition than their dissenting Neighbours, when such an one is chosen by the major Part of a Congregation, creeping into it by Intrigue, as ^a Dr. Calamy himself confesses it sometimes happens. Nay, indeed, they are in somewhat better, especially below in the Country, because they can resort to some neighbouring Church better provided for, with little Inconvenience, and often as conveniently as to their own, which a Dissenter

* The Passage of Dr. Calamy referred to, is in his Sermon, preached at the Ordination of Mr. John Munkley, p. 13. in these Words — *It cannot, indeed, be denied, but that, where Persons have the free Choice of their own Pastors, Fancy may often very much influence them in the fixing on one rather than another; Interest also may sometimes have a great Sway, and there may be room for various Intrigues of designing Men, as we now and then see and observe, to our Sorrow.*

cannot

cannot do, the Meetings there being thin spread, those especially of the same Sect and Denomination. Is he suspected of Heresy? His Heresy, so long as he keeps it to himself, will do *them* no Mischief. Does he affect to spread it? That is giving them Notice to beware of him; and by the Help of Books and of other orthodox and pious Clergymen, to whom all who appear solicitously concerned for their Salvation will be welcome, may be secured from any harm he can do them. If he be profligate and immoral, in a notorious Degree, (a Case, however, I hope, rarely happening) any Parishioner, or other, will highly deserve Commendation, and hardly fail of it from all that are serious, if he endeavour to have him legally removed. And if he fail in his Attempt, (which in a plain Case, is not likely) he would be less to be blamed, if he should afterwards, resort, although constantly, to some other Church. If there be only some Faults and Blemishes in his Life, and it be not altogether so irreproachable as it ought to be, yet if he regularly performs the Offices of Religion, and duly administers the holy Sacraments, (the Efficacy whereof does not depend upon the Worthiness of the Minister) and laudably discharges the other Duties of his Function, and his Doctrine be true and good, he may be useful to them, and help them forward in the Way that leads to everlasting Life. Don't be surprized, Sir, as if you thought I was advancing *strange* Principles, in favour of vicious Clergymen. Not quite so *strange*, Sir, as you may imagine; for I can name you wise and good Men, and, among these, ^a some of the best of the old Puritans them-

^a This is held by Mr. *Samuel Hieron*, *Preacher's Plea*: By Mr. *Anthony Burges*, *Treatise of Faith and Assurance*, p. 503. By Mr. *Reiner*, in his *Resolution of the Question*, Whether Grace be essentially necessary to a Minister of the Gospel: By Mr. *Ball*, *Trial* selves

selves, who have said and maintained the same thing; *that God gives ministerial Abilities to many who have not saving Grace—that we may lawfully attend upon the Ministry of those whose Lives and Conversations are offensive, if their Doctrines be sound and good—that their Lives are no just Plea for neglecting their Ministry, or avoiding their Communion—that God sometimes makes Use of an unregenerate Preacher to convert Souls, and that some godly Souls have confessed, that such have been the Means of their Conversion.* And in regard to others who are conscionable in their Place, and of unblameable Life, yet of inferior Abilities, and but meanly qualified for the Ministry, they hold, *that there are none, be they ever so wise, but may profit by them, and that their Ministry, therefore, is not to be forsaken with Contempt.* In all these Cases, the Souls of the People may be very safe, under their proper Minister, if they will but make Use of all the Assurances he can give them, with such other Helps, as, in great Plenty, lie before them, good Books, religious Discourse and Conference, with Application, in Cases of Doubt and Difficulty, to such other Ministers, as may be esteemed abler, and more pious, who will doubtless, afford them free Access, and give them their best Assistance, in all Matters concerning their Salvation.

I expect, Sir, you will tell me (for 'tis a popular and captivating Argument, and is got, I know not how, into every Body's Mouth) that one has, surely, as good Right to chuse his own *Pastor*, to whom he commits the Care and Guidance of his Soul, as to chuse his *Lawyer* or *Physician*, with whom he intrusts his *Body* or *Estate*. And yet, Sir, as you

of the Grounds, &c. p. 310. Mr. Perkins also in his Expos. of Christ's Sermon; and Mr. Pemble on the Nature and Properties of Grace, p. 125. hold the same thing.

know

know very well, *Physicians*, in many Places, are provided, neither by each *Patient* for himself, nor by the collective Body of the Society, nor the Majority of them, but either by the immediate Governors thereof, or by the Publick, while no Body dreams of any Inroad upon their natural Rights, or any Kind of Hardship being put upon them. The Pensioners (for Example) of the Royal Hospitals of *Greenwich* and *Chelsea* do not, I presume, complain, nor does, I believe, any Dissenter in *England* think they have Reason to complain, of any Infringement of their natural Rights, by having *Physicians* provided for them by the Government. Nor do the Patients in *St. Thomas's*, or *St. Bartholomew's* think themselves ill treated, because their *Physicians* and Surgeons are not of their *own chusing*; especially having Liberty to call in the Assistance of any other in Cases of Difficulty and Danger, as any Parishioner, in extraordinary Cases, as under Doubts and Perplexities of Conscience, for Example, may seek for pastoral Instruction and Advice, wherever he pleases. Nor did our Fleets or Armies, as far as I have heard, ever mutiny on that Account. And as to Lawyers, though you may ordinarily employ whom you please to plead your Cause at the Bar, and to transact for you some other Matters, yet, in many Cases one may easily name, they are *provided* for you, and *imposed* upon you. And particularly, you must abide, tho' your whole Property, or even Life were at Stake, by such Judges as the King's Majesty shall appoint to distribute Justice in his Dominions. And this suggests a very plain Difference between the two Cases of chusing your Pastors and chusing your Lawyers and Physicians. Your Pastors are your Guides and Governors, to whom you owe Subjection in spiritual Things; and it is not, I think, quite so reasonable to challenge

to yourselves the chusing of *these* as of *the other*, who have no Authority over you, who are only to do for you one particular Service, and be paid for it, and when that is done, have no farther Concern with you. Twenty Things more have been already said by others, to shew the Difference, and to expose the Flaws of this Reasoning. But my present Business is not so much *confuting*, as *representing* this Principle, shewing how it is held by You, and how notoriously, all the while, *slighted* and *counteracted* in your own Practices.

It is well known, that the Presbyterians have not been always in the Sentiments they now profess about this matter. There was a Time when they had no Notion of any Right every one had to chuse his own Pastor, but argued against it, just in the manner *we* now do. In their *Jus Divinum Ministerii Evangelici*, this Position is laid down, *that the Election of a Minister does not belong, by divine Right, wholly and solely, to the major Part of every particular Congregation.* And they endeavour to support it, by examining the Texts of Scripture that were used to be *then*, and are *now*, brought for the contrary Opinion, and shewing how they were misunderstood, or misapplied; and by an additional Consideration of the Mischiefs and Inconveniences of such Congregational Elections: nor did your Independents, when they came into Power, abolish Patronages, and restore the People to their pretended Right to chuse their own Pastors, or indeed shew any great Regard to their Desires and Inclinations herein. Some, in the Days of Independency, instead of being *chosen* by the *Parishioners*, were *inducted* into their Livings by a *Troop of Horse.* After the Restoration, indeed, *the Case was altered.* The Church was, then, re-established, and the conformable Clergy put into Possession of the Livings.

Livings. And then presently might be heard a loud and general Cry of all the Sects, your Presbyterians, Sir, as well as others, for the *Divine Right* of the People to desert their Parish Ministers, and to have Pastors of their own chusing. And this Cry has been hitherto continued, nor will, I dare say, ever cease, unless they should have an Opportunity to seize again the publick Churches and Revenues. And then, the former Doctrine and Position, in all likelihood, would be again taken up, that *the Election of Ministers does not belong, by Divine Right, to the major Part of particular Congregations*. Such great and sudden Variations, you must needs, Sir, confess, have an Appearance of setting your Principles to the Times, and State of Things, and give great Cause to suspect, that you yourselves have no mighty Notion, and are not half persuaded of the Sacredness of the Right to chuse your own Pastors, but that you maintain it, and bear it so high, because it is *convenient*, suited to your Circumstances and Situations. But this will appear more plainly, if we consider the manifest Infractions and Violations of it you are daily guilty of, and I am now going to lay before you.

When any one of your Churches becomes vacant by the *Death* or *Conformity* of the Minister, or his being *called to a more loving People*, you, Sir, need not be told, the Way is, to fill it, as soon as may be, to prevent the Dispersion of the Flock, that is to say, in other Words, *to prevent their chusing*, for their Pastor, the Minister of the Parish, or some other that is conformable, whom, during the Vacancy, they may have a Fancy to hear, and happen to take a liking to. But then who are the Electors? In the lesser Country Congregations, where there happens to be one eminently superior to all the rest, it will be easily believed, *he* has the Choice of the Pastor left

to him, and it runs in my Head, *You*, Sir, had that Compliment paid you? In other Congregations, two or three, or half a dozen, we will say, leading Men and principal Subscribers lay their Heads together, and pitch upon one for their future Pastor, the rest, of course, acquiescing in him. And so these, in effect, and to all Purposes, are the Patrons of the Benefice, or Preferment. In larger and richer Congregations there is often a Competition. And who, in *these* Cases, are the *Electors*? In some Churches, and, I suppose, in all of the Independent or Congregational Way, the *Communicants*, while the mere *Auditors*, who, it may be, are Nine in Ten, are excluded: And when their Suffrages have been admitted, it has been said, none but *the Men*, nor *all these* indeed, have any Concern in the Election. Their *Wives*, their *Sons*, and their *Daughters*, their *Man-Servants*, and their *Maid Servants*, have had no Share in it. This, in my Opinion, is a little hard upon that Part of the Congregation. But does the Word of God lay this Hardship upon them? Is the Election of Pastors, by the Scripture-Rule limited to Communicants? Or, if not to *them*, is it to the *Males*, the *Householders*, or *Subscribers*? Where do we read any thing like *that*? — And as this Method of Election is not prescribed or countenanced in God's Book, so neither is it agreeable to your *own* Principles, as they are taught and maintained in your *own* Books. For as they stand *there*, every one is to have the Choice of his Pastor, who has a Soul to be committed to his Charge. And have not *these* Souls, as well as their *Husbands*, their *Fathers*, or their *Masters*? And as *these* are by far the greater Number, were they allowed to have any Part in the Election, and to act *freely* in it, the Majority of Voices, 'tis possible, might go another way.

Well!

Well ! the Election is now over ; and how few can properly be said to have a Pastor of *their own chusing* ? The far greater Part of the Congregation, nine in ten, or nineteen in twenty, as the Case may happen, had no Share in it : and of those who had, very nigh half, it may be, have a Pastor *forced* upon them by the rest, one too, whom they did not only *not chuse*, but have been *struggling against*, and doing all they could to *set aside*. And if these should be so untractable and self-willed, as to think of splitting the Congregation, in Favour of the Gentleman they would have had, (which has been sometimes done, and, as one would think, upon your Principles, not a Word could be said against it) they shall be sure to hear in both Ears of the *Carnality of Religious Contention*, and of the *beinous Sin of causing Schisms in the Church*, and that they ought to be concluded by the Majority ; which upon your Principles, pardon me, good Sir, is just such Nonsense, as if it were said, that, if the major Part were to chuse a Lawyer or Physician for the Congregation, the Minority ought to acquiesce in their Choice, and hold themselves bound to make use of *him*, and of no other.

But let all this pass ; and let us suppose he was *duly*, that is to say, *unanimously* chosen, and that not only by those that are commonly esteemed the rightful Electors, but by the whole Congregation that are of Age and Ability to judge, in some reasonable manner, whom they had best commit the Care of their Souls to. And we will suppose he lives among them (for that is a common Case) Twenty, Thirty, or Forty Years. But then, alas ! *One Generation cometh, and another goeth away* ; and by this time, all his Electors, or very nigh all, may be in their Graves. What is it now that constitutes the Relation between *him* and his *present* People ;

and

and makes him a Pastor to them, more truly than the Parish Minister is to others that are conformable, and would be to *them*, if they would only please to go to Church, and duly attend on his Ministrations. He is, plainly, no Pastor of *theirs*; for he is no Pastor of *their Chusing*. He might be a Pastor to their Ancestors, or to their Predecessors in their Farms, or Shops. But what is that to *them*? These have no more Right to impose a Pastor upon all that come after them, than any Patron has to impose one upon the present Inhabitants of the Parish. In fine, there is no way I can see, consistently with your Principles, to make him related to *them* as *their* Pastor, but his making, once in a while, a *formal Cession* of his Meeting, and being then, if it shall so happen, *re-elected* into it.

In the next Place, Sir, I can't understand, how the Constitution of a Church by an *explicite* Covenant (the Constitution of some of your Churches) is reconciled with the Right of the People to chuse their Pastors, as they do their Lawyers or Physicians. Perhaps, you will say, this is very strange; for is not their Covenanting with their Pastors to walk with *them* in all Christian Ordinances, according to God's Appointment, the very Use and Exercise of such a Right? I agree to it. But then, Sir, I desire to know, is not this Covenant understood to be, ordinarily, for Life? And do you chuse your Lawyers or Physicians *so*? Do you chuse *these* once for all, and bind yourselves to them by a Covenant, in such manner, that you can't leave them at pleasure, and when you think you have Cause for it? When you have chosen your Pastor, you may repent of it, and sometimes, perhaps, have Reason good to do so. But your Choice is made; and you are not at liberty to join yourselves to another, unless he, to whom you were joined before, shall re-

leave you. And this plainly appears from a little Book, entitled, *Heads of Agreement assented to by the United Ministers in and about London, formerly called Presbyterian and Congregational*. Where, Sir, be pleased to observe, they were formerly called Presbyterian and Congregational, but were not thenceforward to be called so. For these *two Sticks being made one*, they were neither Presbyterian nor Congregational, but something between both, tho' in truth, a great deal more Congregational than Presbyterian, the Presbyterians having, in a manner, gone over, and given up their Principles for the sake of Peace. I wish they would have done as much, they need not, I think, to have done more, in order to Peace and Union with the Church of England. But this only by the Way. Let us come to the Point we were upon. Say the united Ministers, *A Visible Professor joined to a particular Church ought to continue stedfastly with the said Church, and not forsake the Ministry and Ordinances there dispensed, without an orderly seeking a Recommendation unto another Church*. And if he attempt to join himself, without such Recommendation, to another, he ought not to be received. *We ought not (say they) to admit any one to be a Member of our respective Congregations, that has joined himself to another, without Endeavours of mutual Satisfaction of the Congregations concerned*. It is not meant, as you, Sir, perhaps, in the Simplicity of your Heart, may imagine, that a Professor joined, or in Communion with his Parish Church, *ought to continue stedfastly with the said Church, and not forsake the Ministry and Ordinances there dispensed*, and that, if he offer to join himself to a Dissenting Congregation, he ought not to be there ad-

A Sermon so entitled, preach'd by Mr. Mead before the United Ministers on occasion of their Union.

mitted,

mitted, unless the Minister of the Parish be content and satisfied therewith. No, Sir; *Meo periculo*, I'll be answerable for them, that was none of their Meaning. His Parish Church he may leave, as he pleases, out of *Will*, or *Humour*, *Levity*, *Interest*, *Distaste*, or any Motive whatever, and be readily received among *them* without asking any Questions, without bringing, or seeking a Recommendation from his Parish Minister. But when he has left his Parish Church, and is once joined to any Dissenting Congregation, then, Sir, but not before, it is a *sinful Withdrawing*, if upon such Motives, without leave or asking leave, he depart from that Congregation. And whatever his Motives are, he cannot be received into any other Church, without a fair Recommendation from his former. They do indeed say, *Such Recommendation ought to be given, when the Case of the Person apparently requires it.* But who is to be Judge (he and his Church, you may be sure, and nobody else) of that *Apparency*? And he, for his Part, one may easily suppose, is too much interested in the Greatness of his Congregation, to be over free of such Favours. If one removes his Habitation to any great Distance, that is a Case that does *apparently* require it, and his Pastor, as one would imagine, can't, for shame, refuse to dismiss him, and send him away in Peace. And yet, perchance, even in *this* Case, it may be held right, not to dismiss him *in haste*, or perhaps, *at all*, if there be thought any just and reasonable Exception to the Pastor or Congregation he is now betaking himself to. And in this Refusal he is plainly countenanced, if not fully justified, by Ch. 28. of *The Institution of Churches and the Order appointed in them by Jesus Christ*, where, after declaring the just Causes of any one's Departure, 'tis said, *be consulting with the Church, or the Officer or Officers*

cers thereof, may peaceably depart from the Communion of the Church, wherewith he has walked, to join himself with some other Church WHERE HE MAY ENJOY THE ORDINANCES IN THE PURITY OF THE SAME. A plain Intimation, that in case it be apprehended he cannot enjoy there all the Ordinances in their *Purity*, his Dismission may be justly refused. But as to the Plea of Distance of Habitation, if he still reside in any Part of *London*, or *Westminster*, with their *Suburbs*, and the *Borough*, I doubt it will hardly, in any Case, be admitted. For in all likelihood, it will be said, he may still continue in the Communion of the Church whereunto he was joined, as Hundreds are known to do from the most distant Parts of those Places.—See, Sir, now, what Difficulties a Man may be brought into by this *unscriptural Method*, this *crafty Invention* of a Church Covenant, where it is practised; how it deprives him of his Right, if not to chuse *once*, yet to *dismiss* his Pastor, when he sees Cause; and that, under the *Shew of Liberty*, it holds him in *real Bondage*.

Sometimes, Sir, it happens that Gentlemen of your Persuasion are possessed of the Advowsons of Benefices appendant to their Manors, or Estates. How do they act, in the Disposal of them, on any Vacancy? If they would act conscientiously, according to their Principles, they can do no other than leave the Matter to the Parish, presenting such Clerk as the Parishoners shall chuse, or nominate. But I have not heard of any Instances of this Proceeding. I suppose they do, upon such Occasions, like some other Patrons, regarding private and personal Considerations, more than the *real Good*; or (which, at least, we ought to expect from *them*) the *Fancies* and *Inclinations* of the People. I know, not, Sir, whether you are a Patron, having never been,

been, as you may guess, mightily inquisitive after those Matters. But a Relation of yours, as you very well known, has the alternate Right of a Presentation to a Rectory in your Neighbourhood, and when he disposed of it the last time it fell into his Hands, he never *consulted*, or *minded* the Parishioners, but presented a Gentleman *after his own liking*; and you are not ignorant of the general Discontent of the Parishioners thereat, and how much, then, they regretted the Loss of their late Minister. And from the few Instances I have heard of, I am apt to think, it would, upon a particular Enquiry, be found, that such Clergymen as have been presented by Dissenters, are generally less, but, to be sure, not more acceptable to their Parishioners, than others.

But their most scandalous Contravention to their own Principles is in the Choice of City Lecturers, where they are sometimes seen as busy as other People, collecting and mustering their Forces in behalf of a Gentleman whom *they know not*, nor *ever intend to hear*, and *care not a chip for*, and striving, by the weight of *their* Suffrages, to turn the Election in *his* Favour, and so *force* him upon the Parish, *against the Liking*, as it may happen, of the *far greater Part* of his Auditors. This is not very modest, no more than it would be in the Members of our Church to be seen thronging to a Meeting, to vote in the Election of your Ministers. But setting aside the Immodesty of the thing; it is such an open, direct, immediate, bare-faced Contradiction to their avowed Principles, as Dissenters, that one would think it can't but be perceived by the meanest, or most unattentive of them, and must be accompanied with the Condemnation of their own Hearts. Their Ministers teach them, and they, doubtless, believe, that the Salvation of Men so

much depends upon their liking of their Pastor, that he ought to be of their own chusing. Yet *will* they, if it be possible, *impose* Pastors upon our People, *against their Liking* and Inclination, as if they meant to hinder their Salvation. I wish their Ministers would be pleased to teach them better, and admonish them not to interest themselves on these Occasions, but to walk more *charitably* towards us, as well as act more *consistently* with themselves. Permit me to tell those Gentlemen, it would become them, and be much for their Credit, to do so. We should then say, *This is fair! This is honest! This is consistent!* But if, instead of this, they let them *go on*, if not *encourage* them to *stickle* in these Affairs, they may be thought, perhaps, more attentive to their *little Designs*, and *Party-Views*, than to their *Principles*. In fine, if this Practice continues, I am humbly of Opinion, it ought to be, by Law and Authority, prevented, by taking away a Right (if any they have) prejudicial to the Church of *England*, and no way *Valuable*, but rather *Injurious* to themselves, inasmuch as they cannot make, *conscientiously*, any use of it.

Near a-kin with the foregoing there is another Reason many of you have for their Separation (but whether this, Sir, be one of yours, I am not certain) to wit, *purser Ordinances*, and *better Edification*. The public Worship of the Establish'd Church and the Instructions there given, are not, it seems, so *pure* and so *edifying*, as those they find at Meeting. And they hold themselves not only *at Liberty*, but indeed *bound*, to chuse the *purest Ordinances*, and to sit down under that *Preaching*, by which they think they can *most profit*. Of those who leave the Communion of the Church for the Meeting on any *Religious Account* or Pretence (for you must, Sir, be

be sensible, some do it for *Interest*, or out of *Pique* and *Distaste*, and other Motives equally corrupt) I am well satisfied there is hardly two in twenty, but do it, and will own they do it, *chiefly*, if not *solely*, upon this Account. They have no Scruples about the Lawfulness of our Communion, at least *at the Time of their leaving us*, whatever they may come to have *afterwards* through the Industry of their new Pastors, and the constant Conversation of their new Friends, who will, doubtless, omit no Opportunity to sow, and carefully cultivate in their Minds, the same Scruples and Prejudices they themselves are possessed with. And of those who have *always* been in the dissenting Way, I am convinced there are not a few (divers there are, to my Knowledge) who will freely own *they have nothing to say against the Church*, but that 'tis only for *better Teaching*, that they do as they do, and continue in the Way they were put into. And they apprehend it is their Duty to do so. This is what they say, and your Ministers seem to approve and *praise their Saying*. They seem to be unanimous in *this*, that 'tis *right* to separate for *greater Purity of Worship*; and I don't perceive they deny, but are willing enough to have it thought, that 'tis also *right* to separate for *more edifying Preaching*. *Edifying*, says ^a one of them, *is generally used for Instructing and Teaching; and a Man is edified, when he improves in spiritual Knowledge, in Faith, in Love to God and Men. And this being* (continues he, and, doubtless, agreeably to the Sentiments of the rest) *the greatest thing a Christian has to look after, he is bound to use those means he finds most conducive thereunto*. This is true or false, according as it is taken. If it be taken to mean, that a Christian is bound, in regard to his

^a Remarks on Dr. Wells's Letter, &c. p. 34.

own Soul, to follow, and constantly adhere to such Teacher, as he apprehends to preach *most edifyingly*, so far as he *may*, consistently with the Peace and common Edification of the Church of God, and the Duty he owes to it; this, I think, may be admitted as true and incontestable: But if it be taken to mean, as it must mean to be pertinent to *his* Purpose, that he is *bound* to adhere to such Teacher for his own private Edification, and to follow him beyond the Pale of the Church, and at the Expence of its Edification, Unity, and Peace, nothing can be falser; and I may add, too, more *absurd*, because it supposes, that by means of committing a Sin, and staining his Soul with Guilt, he is edified and improved in Faith and Holiness. And the Plea it contains for Separation is such, as none would make who have any Notion of a Church, and of *one* Church, or the least Sense of any Obligation Christians are under to preserve the Unity thereof.

We find, Sir, every now and then, your Ministers valuing themselves for being the *Children and Followers* of the old *Puritans*. I wish to God that they were. We should not then see them, as now we do, justifying and encouraging Separation, upon the sole Account of *less defective Ways of Worship*, and *more edifying Preaching*. For so did *not* the old *Puritans*. If they were really *their* Children, and Inheritors of *their* Principles, we should have them daily, if not in our Pulpits, yet in our Churches, and their People following their Examples. And if there were any, obstinately continuing in their Separation, we might expect to see *The Unreasonableness of Separation, Separation self-condemned, A friendly Trial of the Grounds of Separation,*

* Titles of Books written by the old Nonconformists against the Separatists of those Times.

*A grave and modest Confutation of the Separatists, and the Arraignment of Schism, flowing from their Pens, as well as from those of their pretended Ancestors. To be plain, Sir, they mistake their Family: It is not so good as they imagine. If they had any Fore-fathers among us, they must be the old Brownists^b, not the Puritans, their great Adversaries and Opponents. The Brownists were real Separatists, but these not. Therefore they are their Fathers; and, I am sorry to say it, they even seem to have degenerated from them, in Point of Looseness of Principle, about Church-Communion. The Brownists separated themselves from the Church, because, it seems, in their Opinions, it had not the *Essence*, and, as the Word is, *the constitutive Form* of a Church. Give them a Church rightly (in their Minds) formed and constituted, and there is Reason to think they would not have separated from it, merely on such Accounts as we are now speaking of. Will you please, Sir, to hear what they say in their Apology N. 36. *None are to separate for Faults and Corruptions, which may and will fall out among Men, even in true constituted Churches, but by due Order to seek the Redress thereof. And if not for Faults and Corruptions, then not, surely, for mere Defects not essential, or for a greater Purity of Administrations,**

^b Baylie in his *Dissuasive from the Errors of the Time*, p. 53 calls the Independents, the Separatists Offspring. "Concerning their Original (says he) the Separatists were their Fathers. This is demonstrable, not only by the Consanguinity of their Tenets, the one having borrowed all their chief Doctrines and Practices from the other, but also by Deduction of their Pedigree in this clear Line. Master Robinson did derive his Way to his separate Congregation at *Leyden*; a part of them did carry it over to *Plymouth* in *New England*; here, Master Cotton did take it up, and transmit it from thence to Master Thomas Goodwin, who did help to propagate it to sundry others in *Old England* first, and after, to more in *Holland*, 'till now by many Hands it is sown thick in divers Parts of this Kingdom."

and

and less still, I think, for the *Want of the most excellent and edifying Preaching.*

It is not, Sir, very easy to understand what it is that your Friends mean by *less defective Ways of Worship*, and *purser Administrations* than those in the Church of *England*. As to Defects in our Worship, Have we dropp'd or mutilated any Ordinance of God? Have we not publick Prayers and Supplications to him for all needful Things? Do we not celebrate his Praises? Do we not read publickly the Holy Scriptures? Is not his pure Word preached? And the Sacraments, are they not duly administred among us? If any Gospel-Ordinance be wanting, let *them*, or will you, Sir, be pleased to name it.—And as to *Purity of Ordinances*, I know not what it should be, or consist in, besides a *Conformity to the Institution*. And pray tell me, which of the Ordinances of the Gospel are here administred, in any such Manner uncomformable to, and disagreeing with the Institution, as can, in the least, hinder and obstruct the Virtue and Efficacy thereof. I do indeed suspect you estimate the *Purity of Ordinances and Churches*, by the *Paucity of Rites and Ceremonies* received into them, and hold those purest that have none at all. By which Rule, your Churches (if you have no Ceremonies, which, perhaps, at some other Time, I shall inquire into) must be esteemed purer than the Apostolical, which had certainly *some*, such as, *the Kiss of Peace, Uncovering the Heads of the Men* in divine Offices, in token of the *natural Superiority of that Sex*, and *veiling those of the Women*, in token of *their Subjection and Subordination to it*.

Supposing, however, some *Defects not essential*, something *wanting* in our Church, that would be expedient and useful, or something *in it*, not so well ordered as could be wished, I am very sure that

neither

neither our blessed Saviour, nor his Evangelists, or Apostles, *Peter, Paul, James, or John*, ever taught you, it was your Duty to renounce Communion with the Church on those Accounts. *St. Paul*, particularly, when he had Occasion, in his *Epistles*, to take Notice of some considerable Irregularities and Abuses which had crept into the Discipline and Worship of the Churches he writes to, gives no Injunction or Command, nor so much as drops the least Intimation of its being the Duty of all who would be accounted faithful, to set up separate and *less defective Ways of Worship*, and to form themselves into distinct and opposite Communions upon that footing. Hence I think it is pretty plain, he had no Thought of *the great Duty of Separation* upon Account of *greater Purity*, or *less defective Ways of Worship*. Nor let it be said, we ourselves own the Truth and Justness of this Principle, by our own separating, *for greater Purity of Worship*, from *the Church of Rome*. Not, Sir, for *greater Purity*, properly speaking, but for *Purity absolutely considered*. The Worship of that Church is grossly idolatrous, and, therefore, *quite impure*, and *down-right sinful*; and when *ours* comes to be so, I will freely allow you to go out from it, and do hereby engage to go out of it too, myself, in Company with you.

As to *more edifying Preaching*, we are not ignorant what is *theirs*, and what *ours* is. But of this I will say no more; though we might say, too, after the Apostle, very justly, *seeing that many glory after the Flesh, we will glory also*. I will allow *theirs* to be as edifying as they please, since *St. Paul* does not allow *that* to be a good Plea for your Separation. Let any one think otherwise, if he can, when he reads and considers these Words of his to the *Corinthians*, 1 Cor. iii. 4. *While one saith, I*
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am of Paul, and another, I am of Apollos, are ye not carnal? Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but Ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every Man. I have planted, Apollos watered: But God gave the Increase. So then, neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the Increase. Here is a sharp and severe Censure of their magnifying, and being puffed up for one Teacher against another, and *that*, tho' he himself was one of the Parties so magnified, and though, too, there was no actual Separation of the other, with his Adherents, in point of Church Communion. And here we have, too, strong Reasoning and convincing Argument against it. "Who am I, says he in effect, or who that *Apollos* whom some of you so extol, as if he had led you further, and given you a deeper Insight into the Mysteries of the Gospel, and *edified you more*, than I have done. We are but Servants and Instruments, by whom the Doctrine of the Gospel has been convey'd to you, whose Gifts, being from God alone, do not afford you the least ground to attribute any thing to your Teachers. I planted the Gospel among you; *Apollos* came after, and watered it. What then? Nothing from hence can be ascribed to either of us. Neither he, nor I have any Power to make it take Root, and grow in your Hearts. Our Gifts, whether great or small, in this respect are as nothing, but the Growth and Encrease is owing to God alone, and to his Blessing upon his Ordinance." Is this talking now like one who held it the Duty of every Christian to follow, though it were into actual and open Schism, such Teacher as he judges the most excellent and edifying? No, Sir, he was far from inculcating any such Church-dividing, and Church-destroying Principle; for such it plainly is; and as it has been exceedingly hurtful to *our Church*, so,
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e're this, it would have utterly confounded your Churches, if your People had constantly pursued, and acted, in all things, in Consistency with it, and your Ministers had not taken (of which more by and by) *wise Measures* and *prudent Precautions* to prevent its operating among you, in so destructive a manner.

To make it appear, that your People are not true to this Principle, and act, in many Things, inconsistently with it, let it be remembered what it is: That every Christian is bound to adhere to that Way of Worship which is least defective, and to that Teacher whom he judges most edifying, is the Principle. Do they, now, follow this Principle in all Things? Few of them do, any further than while they have separated themselves from the Church of England, by the help of it. When that is done, they lay it aside as useless, or as dangerous in the Use.

In saying, as you do, you only chuse, as it is your Duty, *the least defective Way of Worship*, you plainly confess there are some Defects in your own Way, as well as ours, though not so great, or many. Now for the same Reason that you are bound to chuse a *less defective Way of Worship*, you are, certainly, bound to chuse one that has no Defects at all. True, you will say, but such an one is hardly to be found. I believe so too: That is, certainly, the very Truth of the Case: But if such a Church is, at present, no where to be found, might it not be formed? Why should not you, Sir, and such others as are sensible of Defects in your own Churches, divide yourselves from the rest who are fond of continuing them, and gathering together from all Parts, if there are not enough for the Purpose issuing out of each Congregation, form yourselves into a Church which shall be free from those Defects at least, if not from

from all other? And if all cannot agree in any one Form or Method of Divine Worship that shall be thought *without Defect*, you may *subdivide* again and again, and *all who are like minded in every Thing* make up a *little Flock*, to worship God in their own Way. I know, it will be said, " This is quite " Ridiculous and Absurd! This would be very In- " convenient, and tends to endless Confusion! " This would be doing like a certain *New England* " Minister, of whom the Story goes, that he could " not bear the Defects of their Worship *there*, and " therefore *forsook* it, turned a kind of *Seeker*, and " at last could not find (good Man!) any Church " upon Earth purified enough for him to communi- " cate withal." Well, that Gentleman may be ridiculed; but, for all that, he was, *a perfectly consistent Protestant Dissenter*: He did but act *the true practical Part* of his own Principle; and his Brethren in *Old England* must do the same, or else renounce the Principle upon which the Church of *England* is forsaken.

Thus (for Example) in some of your Churches, the Minister *uses the Lord's Prayer*; in others, *not*: Most of you, 'tis like, approve of Singing *David's Psalms*, but some may be possessed with Scruples, and think ^a the *Sectarian Objections*, which Mr. *Baxter* speaks of, against Singing them, of great Weight, at least 'till they are *Christianized*, in some such way as is done by Dr. *Watts*, and made more suitable to the Gospel-State: In some again, I suppose, they are sung, the first Line only being rehearsed aloud, the Congregation going on, of themselves, with the rest; in others, it is repeated Line by Line. Now, considering that it is not the Harmony of your Sentiments and Principles about these Matters, but mere

^a Cases of Conscience, *Quest.* 124.

Proximity of Habitation, especially in the Country, that brings you together to the same Meeting, it would be very *marvellous*, if it should fall out, that *all, in every Place*, whose Lot it is to have their Habitations in the same Parish or Neighbourhood, and who, therefore, assemble together, should have the same Sentiments concerning these Things. As you are well known to think differently about them, one Part, a greater or a less, in every Congregation, may be fairly supposed to think, that the repeating the Psalm *Line by Line* is a *Defect*, as it interrupts and spoils the Harmony; another Part, particularly those that have not Psalm Books, or cannot read, must surely think, the not repeating it so is more than a *Defect*, a *real Corruption*, as it keeps them from *knowing* what is sung, and *joining* in it, and is, therefore, contrary to Edification. And as to the Lord's Prayer, one Part of the Congregation is likely to think, the Minister's not using it, is a Slight and Disrespect to it; and the other, that it too much *countenances* Forms of Prayer, and tends to the *quenching of the Spirit*. And yet we find, these Defects and Corruptions notwithstanding, you keep together, and have no Thought of separating, and setting up a *less defective Way of Worship*; which, to be true to your Principles, any Child can see you ought to do.

There is as little Reason to believe that your Friends do, generally, follow what they think *the most Excellent and Edifying Preaching*, as that they, generally, adhere to what they esteem *the least defective Way of Worship*. In the City, I guess, they are mostly determined to embrace the Ministry of *this* or *that* Gentleman, by their *Personal Knowledge* of, *Friendship* with, or *Relation* to him, some particular *Views and Interests*, *Nearness of Habitation* to his Meeting, and other Considerations of the like Nature.

ture. And though, now and then, they may be disposed to follow the Preaching of some other Minister of more Excellent Gifts, and admired Qualifications, yet they content themselves to sit down, ordinarily, under the Ministry of *their own*. And, indeed, if it were otherwise, I am ready to think, there would be some half a Dozen, or such a number of Meetings, where the People would be thronged to Death, while the rest would remain almost empty. Look into the Country, and there it will be plain, there are few or none but go to the nearest and most convenient Meeting. But now, is it likely that all the Members of each Congregation, or the Bulk and Generality of them, do in their Consciences think their own Pastor more Edifying than any they know elsewhere? It would be a mighty Chance, and indeed a Miracle, if it were so. No doubt of it, there will be in the Neighbourhood, in one Place or other, whither they may resort every Lord's Day, some other Minister, whom great numbers of them can't but confess to be more Edifying than he who is now their Pastor. And if there be, they will be obliged, I think, by their Principle, *of the Duty of following the most Edifying Preacher*, to resort, ordinarily, to him. Or suppose, in their Neighbourhood, there be none esteemed better than their own, yet, if in their Journeys any whither, or when they have had Occasion to repair to *the famous City of London*, they have chanced to find, among *the learned Divines there*, such an one, in comparison with whom their own Country Minister shall be, perhaps, esteemed Nobody, I don't see how they can be excused from removing their Habitations into the City, or near it, that they may have the Benefit of his Ministry. This, I own, may be somewhat inconvenient and prejudicial to them in their Worldly Concerns; but

no matter for *that*. It is not fit that leaving a good Farm, or well accustomed Shop, or forsaking either Brethren, or Sisters, or Father, or Mother, should be put in Ballance against the *Edification* and *Salvation* of their Souls. And if, for their own private and particular Edification, they can dispense with themselves to *disturb the Peace of the Church*, and *tear it in Pieces*, I think they may well submit to some temporal Inconvenience, on the same good Account.

It was intimated before, that your Ministers have taken some *wise Measures and Precautions* to hinder the Operation of *this Principle* to their own hurt. This is done by the Covenant before-mentioned, which formerly all your Independents, or Congregational Men, brought their People into, as some, I suppose, still do to receive *them* for their Pastors, and to walk constantly with *them* in Christian Ordinances. I sometimes wonder within myself, that their People, who have so deeply imbibed this Notion, that their Salvation so much depends upon their having *the most Edifying Teaching*, should be so unreflecting and inconsiderate, as to suffer themselves to be drawn into any Engagements of this sort, and to pin themselves down, perhaps for Life, to the Ministry of any one whatever. They should have considered, there is a good deal of *Delicacy and Fastidiousness* in their *Taste* of Preaching; and, therefore, that they could not be sure, that, *the first Relish being over*, he will appear to *them* as Edifying as he does *now*; or, however, that there is, in most, such a Fickleness and Inclination to change, that they cannot be certain they shall like *any*, very long. And if they were sure they should always like him as well as they do at present, they cannot be sure, but some other Minister may be found, or come into the Country, before long,

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whom they may like still better, and think more Edifying than *he*, and that they may then have upon their Spirits a strong Impulse, and irresistible Incitation to put themselves under his Ministry, when they can't do it. They may humbly pray to be dismissed, averring and protesting, they have found a Gentleman by whom they can profit more, as possibly they may twenty, one after another; for, as * Mr. Baxter observes, *there may be twenty Ministers, one abler than another in their several Degrees*; to say nothing of the *Humours* and *Caprices* of Men, which will make the Difference between them appear still greater. I say, they may pray and plead for Dismission, but their Plea is not like to be admitted. They will, probably, be told, it is not in their Churches allowed to be good; and be referr'd for this to *The Institution and the Orders appointed in them by Jesus Christ*, where Sect. 28. they will read thus, — *Persons that are joined in Church Fellowship ought not lightly, or without just Cause, to withdraw themselves from the Communion of the Church, whereunto they are so joined*; and then, the just and weighty Causes for withdrawing, allowed to be such in their Churches, are thus enumerated. *Nevertheless, where any Person cannot continue in any Church without his Sin, either for want of the Administration of any Ordinance instituted by Christ, or by his being deprived of his due Privileges, or compelled to any thing in Practice not warranted by the Word, or in Case of Persecution, or upon the Account of Conveniency of Habitation, he, consulting with the Church, or the Officer or Officers thereof, may peaceably depart.* — Here, Sir, you see, and *they*, doubtless, will be bid to observe, is not a Syllable concerning departing, or being dismissed,

* Defence of the Cure, Part I. Page 85.

for better Edification. And as that is a Case more likely to happen, and which, doubtless, does happen ten Times oftner than any of those that are mentioned, we may be sure it would have been mentioned, and the same Indulgence of a peaceable Departure would have been allowed in *this*, as in the other Cases, if the Reason for it had been esteemed sufficient. And then, in order to terrify them, they will, without Question, be put in Mind of the Covenant of God, *which they entered into before him, and his Holy Angels, and is recorded on high*, to accept their present Pastors, and to walk with them in Subjection to *Christ's* Appointment, and what a Sin it would be, if, from their own *Fancy, Will, or Humour*, they should *break their Bond, and leave their Place*. But to make them easy, they will, probably, be told, in Conclusion, and earnestly desired to consider, that the Benefit of Sermons does not solely, or chiefly, depend upon the Gifts and Accomplishments of the Preacher, but on the good Dispositions of the Hearers, and the Blessing of God, that, under the Ministry of their present Pastors, nothing is wanting that is requisite to bring them to Salvation, and if they believe *that*, they may and *ought* to be content, in Consideration of the Peace and Quiet, which all good Christians ought to seek, and have a tender Regard to, and, indeed, to the very Being of the Churches, which must be dissolved and broken in Pieces, if all were to follow their Examples, and every Man to run from Minister to Minister, Church to Church, to find out, or under Pretext of having found out, better Means of Edification. This Doctrine is very likely to be delivered, and earnestly inculcated, on such Occasions; and, if it were rightly applied, is true, however unseemly it may appear in the Mouth of a Dissenting Minister, who has been, perchance,

at proper Times and Places, continually countenancing and encouraging, if not openly teaching, a quite contrary one, and owes, it may be, no inconsiderable Part of his Congregation and Income to the Impressions made by it.

However, suppose the *general Plea* of better Edification should be allowed good; there may, yet, be Reason for not admitting it *in any particular Case that may happen*. Let us put the Case, that Mr. *Chandler's* and Dr. *Guise's* Congregations (for Example) were joined to those Gentlemen by such a Covenant, as we have been speaking of. I don't know that they are, or that either of them is; and as there are now, I do imagine, few such, to what there were formerly, or some Years ago, 'tis likely neither of them is. However, let us suppose they were; and let the Question be, whether a Member of Dr. *Guise's* Congregation shall be allowed to depart, for better Edification to Mr. *Chandler's*, or one of Mr. *Chandler's* to Dr. *Guise's*. Now it may not be apparent to either of those Ministers, as it is to be before he is dismissed, that this Person *can edify better* under the Ministry of the other. Dr. *Guise* may think it even *impossible* he should profit more under Mr. *Chandler's*, and Mr. *Chandler* think it *equally impossible* he should be *better edified* and instructed under Dr. *Guise's* Ministry, and *his Manner of Preaching Christ*, than his own. This Supposition will hardly be thought unreasonable by any one, into whose Hands the Books of these two Gentlemen against each other concerning *the true Manner of Preaching Christ* shall happen to fall. And what is supposed of these two, may be as well supposed of any other two, who may adhere as obstinately to their respective Notions, and be as much divided in their Opinions and Sentiments about the Subject of *this Controversy*, as *they were*.

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And then if either *cannot*, or *will not* be satisfied, that any of their People may be better edified by the other, they must be content, for what I can see, to keep to their present Pastor, reconcile themselves to him, and make the best Use they can of such Instructions as he is able to give them.

I will put an End to this tedious Argument, with briefly relating an Affair touching the Subject we are now upon, between a late Dissenting Minister, and one of the Members of his Congregation. And though the Affair be *personal*, yet, as it is *public*, and has been many Years in *Print*, and both Parties are now, in all Probability, dead and gone, I hope I may do it without displeasing. The Gentleman, Sir, was Dr. *Williams*, he, who by his Writings against the pernicious Principles of the *Antinomians*, which with great Violence and Impetuosity were breaking in upon your Churches, reclaimed many, and gained to himself thereby much Credit; which, though it may seem a Deviation from the Matter in hand to mention, I was willing to take notice of, that it may appear to you, I am always disposed to give them their Due, and ready to acknowledge whatever Service they shall render to the Church of God. The Lady was a Widow, who had been solemnly joined to his Congregation by this Covenant; but upon some account or other, no matter what, became weary of his Ministry, and had a great Desire to join herself to Mr. *Shower's* Congregation. And by some Expressions in his Letter to her, such as *her grieving his Spirit, despising her Pastor, and weakening his Hands*, it should seem her Departure was *for the sake*, or *under the Pretence of better Edification*. But was this allowed a sufficient Ground for a Departure? Far from it. It is declared to be *slight, such as Christ has no where allowed, such as no sober Christian ever leaves his Pastor upon,*

and she could have no Pleasure in, upon a Death-bed, or at the Bar of Christ. He calls it her Sin, which he, in real Friendship to her, would prevent, and gives her to understand, he should not omit public Proceedings, if she was not reclaimed to her Duty, and that he was sure, were he to give Notice of her Separation, none would admit her to the Lord's Table, 'till she could prove her Reasons valid. All the Use I am to make of this Narrative is only to shew, by a remarkable Example, that the Plea of more edifying Teaching for Separation is not accounted good by your own Ministers among themselves; unless I should further remark their Partiality (for I am loth to call it by any worse Name) when a Departure from one of their Churches to another, tho' it be for better Edification, is made so mighty a Matter, and so terrible a Sin, while a Departure from the established Church to any one of their Churches is reckoned none at all, but rather indeed a Matter of secret Joy and Exultation, even tho', too, it be notoriously known, that such a Departure was made for some worldly Interest, or from Pique and Distaste, or only from Will and Wantonness. — I go on now to some other Points in Difference between us.

In all the Writings, as well as Conversations, of your Friends, there is a mighty Cry against the *Impositions* of the Church, as they love to call them. Great is the *Magic* of Sounds and Words; and they are very sensible of this, as plainly appears by the Terms which they constantly affect to use to denote such Things in the Church as they are pleased to dislike. I omit all the rest, with which I fancy I could fill a Page, and keep to that I have just now mentioned, to wit, *Ecclesiastical Impositions*. These *Impositions* are only the *Laws*, *Injunctions*, or *Constitutions*, whereby the *Worship* and *Discipline* of our

our Church are regulated. And why then do we not hear as much of the Mischief of *these*, as we do of the Mischief of *Impositions*? Why, the Reason is plain. Those Words have no *ill Idea* affix'd to them; and People would wonder where is the mighty *Mischief* of *Laws*, *Constitutions*, and *Injunctions*; very *harmless* things, they would think, and what may be very *useful* and *expedient*, if the Governors of the Church have but Sense enough to judge of *Expediency* and *Usefulness*. But *Impositions* is a Term of *ill Sound*, and has an *abhorred Idea* connected with it. And this is plainly the Reason that 'tis rung so continually in our Ears. And yet, after all, these *mischievous Impositions* seem to be common to all Churches; nor can I frame to myself any Notion of a formed regular Society of Christians, or of a worshipping Assembly, without *Impositions* of one kind or other. And surely, *you*, Sir, have *yours*, as well as the Church *hers*, as you shall plainly see by what follows.

It seems as if *Law*, or *Canon*, or an *Injunction* from those in Authority, some way or other signified, always enters into, and makes Part of a *Dissenter's Idea* of an *Imposition*; as tho' it were impossible there could be any such thing, where any Practice or Usage is not bound upon Minister, or People, one of these ways. But, surely, this is wrong; and there may be an *Imposition*, at least upon the People, by the *mere Will and Pleasure* of the officiating Minister. And to make this plain to the meanest Understanding, I will suppose the whole Constitution of the *Church of England* was dissolved, that the Clergy were released from all Obligation to use the *Common Prayer*, and at full Liberty to modify the public Worship, each in his own Congregation, as he should think fit, but that they, nevertheless, were still of the Mind to use the

Book of *Common Prayer* with all the *Rites and Ceremonies* thereof, just in the manner they now do. I would now ask you, Sir, whether, in such a Case, our *Impositions*, and your *Complaints* of them would be at an end, and cease. I am sure you would say, No; and that you of the Laity had, *now*, as much Reason for Complaint, as you had *before*, that indeed the Clergy *were* eased of all *Impositions*, by being left at Liberty to order the public Worship their own Way, yet the old *Impositions* were still continued, if not *by Law*, yet, *with equal Hardship*, by the *mere Will* of the Clergy, upon the People, every *Rite and Ceremony* of the *Liturgy*, being, *now*, to them, a Term of Communion, as much as ever, *excluding all whom Christ is ready to receive, from Communion, unless they submit to it*. If this be the Case, as it evidently is, 'tis plain, that *Law* and *Authority* are not in the *Notion*, nor have any thing to do in the *Definition* of an *Imposition*, and, consequently, that there may be *real Impositions*, where no *Authority* inforces them, but only the *Will* and *Practice* of their Ministers bind them upon the People. And if so, there may be, Sir, in your separate Congregations, *Impositions*, as well as in the Establish'd Church.— We will then see, if you please, in some Particulars, whether, as there *may* be, so there *are* not *actually* such.

The Imposition of set Forms of Prayer is one of the most grievous you complain of; when yet at Bottom, you are not such Enemies to it, as you seem to be. You know, the *Directory* was of your *own* imposing, and was imposed too, with much greater Rigour, than the *Common Prayer*, as may be seen in some of the Ordinances of Parliament for putting it in Execution. What Authority it has *now* among you, you best know. You hold it not, I suppose, at this time an *obliging* Rule; but you seem

seem, generally, to esteem it a very *good* one, and, I guess, are pretty much guided and *directed* by it. And we are told by Dr. Calamy, in his *Brief and true Account of Protestant Dissenters in England* to his Divine in *Germany*, that the Examination and Ordination of Ministers, in particular, is managed according to the Rules laid down in it. Now the *Directory* is really a kind of a *Form of Prayer*. For it not only *directs* Ministers how they shall act and behave in all the Parts and Offices of public Worship, but also suggests to them the very Matter and Substance of their Prayers and Exhortations, on every Occasion, as well as furnishes and puts into their Mouths just and suitable Expressions. And fain, Sir, would I see a Reason, why the establishing of *that* should not be esteemed as much an *Imposition*, as the injoining the use of the Common Prayer is.

After the Restoration, during the memorable Savoy Conference, Mr. Baxter, that ready Writer, compiled, in a few Weeks, a new Liturgy, and with the other Commissioners on that side, presented an *umble Petition* (for so, belike, it was called) that it might be received and *imposed*, instead of the Liturgy we have. And those who may be supposed to know the Minds of the ejected Ministers perfectly well, seem not to doubt, but, in Case it had been *imposed*, most of them would have submitted to the *Imposition*, and taken to it very kindly—See now, Sir, what their Pretences of *bearing their Testimony against all Impositions* are come to! And said not I true, that they were not, in their Hearts, such determined and irreconcilable Enemies to the *Imposition* of set Forms of Prayer, as, sometimes, they would appear to be? Let but a Form be of *their own devising*, and they will think it mighty right
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it should be *imposed* upon the People, and mighty reasonable the People should submit to it.

But, indeed, praying in the extemporary way is really *imposing* a Form of Prayer upon the Congregation. For such a Prayer is really a Form to *them*, as much as the *Common Prayer* would be, the first time they should be present at it. And if they consider the Thing, they will easily perceive, it is as much a Form *the first Time* as it will be *ever after*. The only Difference is, *the first Time* it is a *New* Form, and, *afterwards*, an *Old*. An extemporary Prayer, you'll say, is not imposed upon the Ministers. What then? 'Tis imposed *by* the Ministers; and that's worse. Though, after all, I do not see how it can be otherwise, but that the People must have a Form *imposed* upon them *by somebody*, unless they could all agree about a Form among themselves, either once for all, or every time they meet together, and then deliver it to the Minister, to be, by him, presented unto God. But then, do we not see, that, in this Case, *they* would *impose* it upon *him*? When all is done, 'tis impossible, in the Nature of Things, but that, in all public and social Prayer, a set Form must be imposed *by*, and *upon*, some or other. With *us*, indeed, it is imposed *both upon Minister, and People*; with *you* upon the People only; and the Ministers, the great Complainers of our Impositions, are, *themselves*, the Imposers. And while we have one constant and unvaried Form imposed, which we can consider and examine, and before we offer it up to God, approve of, which makes it in some Sense our own, *you* have a thousand Forms *imposed* upon you, a new one, if it be really new, and your Ministers do not cheat you every time you go to Meeting; one, too, which you have no time to examine, but must join in, let it be what

it will, fitting or unfitting, the Moment it comes out of his Mouth.

In the next place, Sir, you say, *Kneeling at the Sacrament* is an *Imposition*; and the *Avoidance of Kneeling insisted upon* by your Ministers, is not less (I say) an *Imposition*, than our *enjoining it*: and Dr. Watts himself, does, in effect, admit this. He observes, that, *to our universal Reproach, there is scarce any Party of Christians but has been too ready to impose some Doctrines upon the Belief of their Proselytes which Christ has not imposed, or to require of them some Practices, or some Abstinences about Meats, or Days, or Things indifferent, which Christ has not required*^a. We have, here, not only a plain Acknowledgment that an *imposing Spirit* is no peculiar and distinguishing Character of the Church of England, and that there is scarce any Church^b without it (which is something to my Purpose) but also

^a *Humble Attempt*, &c. pag. 47.

^b The Dissenting Ministers, when, some Years ago, they fell out among themselves, charged each other with *their Impositions*, as much as they do the Church, at other Times, with *hers*. The Author of the Letter to Mr. Robinson, tells him, p. 13. *He can by no means agree with him in p. 404 of his Answer to Mr. Bennet, that This Spirit of Imposition is peculiar to the Clergy called High-Church, unless you will allow the Words High-Church to be applied to all Parties of Christians; for he plainly sees, that this imposing Spirit reigns too much among Men of all Denominations. And to the same Purpose speaks Mr. Simon Brown, p. 34. of his Letter to Mr. Reynolds: I have lived (says he) long enough to be convinced that Men may write against Impositions, with an imposing Spirit, and cry down Impositions on themselves, as an Infringement of Christian Liberty; whilst they can impose upon others, and bear them down, all the while, that they make no Breach upon Christian Liberties. In short, all Men, I find are very much set on justifying themselves; and most Men, rather than own a Blunder in Practice, will fly in the Face of their Principles: or else they have one Set of Principles to defend themselves against the Encroachments of others, and a quite contrary Set to justify their Encroachments on others.*

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(which is more to my Purpose) a Confession, that whatever Church shall require an *Abstinence from*, or an *Avoidance* of any thing *indifferent*, is as much guilty of an *Imposition*, as if the *positive Practice* of that Thing was required. And if so, your Churches must be esteemed guilty of it, in requiring an *Abstinence from Kneeling*; unless it can be shewn, that that Gesture is not *indifferent*, and some Law of *Christ*, or Command in the Gospel, can be pointed out, obliging to the Observance of any one Gesture, in particular.

But not content with this, you do really *impose* the Observance of *one particular Gesture* upon your Communicants, and expect they should *conform* to it. You will allow me, Sir, to bring against you your *own Directory*, once more; and by *that*, *sitting* is *imposed*, as much as *kneeling* is, by the Common Prayer. For thus it says, *The Table being decently covered, and so conveniently placed, that the People may orderly sit about it.* And if it were not imposed by *that*, it is truly and properly *imposed* (as was shewn above) by the regular unvaried Practice of your Churches, and by your Ministers *requiring* it. If one should present himself to take the Sacrament *standing*, but, especially, should he presume to offer to take it *upon his Knees*, I put it to you, Sir, whether you don't think he would undergo some close Arguings, and severe Expostulations, and be plainly told, that since he *seemed to be contentious*, you had *no such Custom*, *neither the Churches of God*. And I put it to your Ministers, whether they *would*, should he continue obstinately in that Posture, *give it him at all*. I have indeed, reason to believe, there are some in a freer and juster way of thinking concerning this, and some other Matters in Controversy between us, and who would not scruple to give the Sacrament kneeling to one who should earnestly

earnestly desire it; but I fear, the Bulk and Gross of them are as rigid as Mr. Baxter in this particular, and would no more give it so than he was willing to do. It seems, there were some who had a Mind to take it of *him*, but *kneeling*. He did not care to give it them, in that Posture; at which a certain Gentleman was so offended, as to become a great Opposer of his Re-establishment at *Kedermister*, after the Restoration. Nor would he ever yield to let them receive it *so*, unless they would do it, at the same time with others who received *sitting*. But this, belike, they scrupled to do; so he would not give it them at all. Dr. Calamy in his *Abridgment of the Life of Mr. Baxter* (p. 296. 2^d Edit.) relates such a Story of him; not, I assure you, Sir, with any Blame, but with evident Tokens of his Approbation of this Stiffness. Could such a Conduct and Behaviour, and such a manifest Approbation of it, have been ever expected from two such Advocates for Condescension to scrupulous Consciences, two such Abhorrrers of Impositions, as Mr. Baxter, and Dr. Calamy were? Though, indeed, with Mr. Baxter it was a common Thing to destroy the Things he had before built, to be inconsistent with himself, and contradict his own Principles.

And now, Sir, having thrown back your charge of Imposition in regard to the Posture of receiving, and, as I humbly conceive, made it appear, that, if our Church imposes *one*, your Churches impose, as truly and properly *another*, we will consider, if you please, your great and popular Objections to that Posture which is imposed by *us*, and try if these also may not be strongly retorted upon you. The Posture, (you say) wherein we receive, is not conformable to our Lord's Example in the Institution and first Administration of this Sacrament, that it first
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grew out of the monstrous Doctrine of Transubstantiation, is, therefore, a *Papish Ceremony*, and, yet, abused to serve the Purposes of *Idolatry*, and naturally tending to it. To the first I reply, that if it is not conformable to the Example of our Lord, in the Institution, it is not necessary it should, unless it can be shewn, that he meant, in the Posture he used at the Institution, to set us an Example, that we should do, as he then did. I don't know any other *Medium* whereby this can be pretended to be shewn, besides the Words of our Saviour, *Do this*. And do they shew it? Can any reasonable Man believe, those Words had any further Reference than to the *Rites*, and *Sacramental Actions*, wherewith the Institution was performed, or that they are to be extended to the very *Gesture*? It may be as well supposed, they are to be extended to all other *Accessories*, or *Appendant Circumstances* of the Institution. Why, Sir, do you not contend for the *Use*, after our Saviour's Example, of *unleavened Bread*? There being as good Proof, and, I think, better, that he administered with this, as that he did it in the *Gesture* you imagine. And how comes it, that you hold not the necessity of using *Wine mixt with Water*? For the Presumption of his using such, at that time, is as strong, as of his using the *Gesture* before mentioned. Why don't you plead for celebrating only in an *upper Room*, only in the *Evening*, and that too immediately after a full Meal, as our Lord is supposed to have administered presently after eating the *Paschal Feast*? Why do any of you allow of Sacraments in the *Morning*, and, perhaps, *Fasting*? Why do you ever admit more than can sit at one *Table*, or than twelve Communicants, the number of the Apostles, at one time? And why any *Women*? For there were none here. Don't you see, Sir, to what Lengths of Absurdity this

this kind of Reasoning will run, and what Whimfies it inevitably leads to? And I wonder your People have not been yet led into them. What can be the Cause of their stopping short, and not pursuing their Reasoning as far as it will go, into other Things, the Necessity of which may be demonstrated, the same way? There must be some Reason for *this*; and if you will give me Leave, I will presume to guess *what*. I doubt, they have some Suspicions of the Goodness and Solidity of this way of Arguing, and are, therefore, so honest, as not to use it a bit farther than there is present Occasion for, that is, no farther than is just necessary to keep up the Separation between us.

But how, Sir, after all, are *you* more conformable than *we*, in this particular, to our Saviour's Practice and Example? It is not so certain as you seem to fancy, that he administered, and the Disciples received in the same Posture wherein they eat the Passover. It is not said they did; nor can it be fairly, from any Circumstances, collected. This Posture, for what we can tell, might be changed; and there is some Probability it was, because, between the Passover and the Supper, the *Blessing* of the Elements, or *giving of Thanks* intervened; and one would hardly imagine that was done in the recumbent Posture. But let it be so, and let all be supposed done in that Posture (I shall not need, I presume, to describe it to you) how can it be said *your Practice* is conformable thereto? You receive sitting; but what Agreement and Conformity, I pray, is there between our *Lord's* and *your Practice*? It is not enough to say, *this* was a Table-gesture in *that Country*; and so is *yours* in *this*. For if *Do this* has any Reference to the Gesture, it certainly directs to that *particular* and *precise* Gesture that was then using. And if that, in these Parts of the World, be not a Table-gesture,

Gesture, it, surely, ought, by Virtue of this Precept, as understood by you, to be made so, at least in the Participation of this Supper.

One Thing more upon this Head it may be proper to observe concerning your Ministers, and their manner of receiving. It must be admitted, and, I suppose, will, at least till the Uses to be made of such a Concession shall be pointed out, that they are as much obliged, as *their People*, to conform themselves to the Gesture wherein our Lord instituted this Sacrament. Now, they, whatever *others* may think, don't allow, I suppose, that he ever changed *his Posture*, but contend, that he kept constantly in the *recumbent Posture*, during the whole time of the Institution, even then when he was *blessing and giving Thanks*. To be conformable, therefore, to this Example, (if sitting, as they say, be really conforming to it) the Ministers, the Administrators, ought to *sit*, and that *always*, and *never once* rise up from their Seats during the whole Service. But do they do so? I doubt *not*. However, you, Sir, know better than I, whether they do, or not. This I observe, Sir, in your *Directory*, that it orders the Communicants to *sit at the Table*; but when it speaks of the Minister by himself, it only orders that he be *at the Table*, when he himself communicates, and distributes the Bread to others. From whence it should seem, it was not expected, or however, not required as necessary, he should be *sitting*, but that it was sufficient, if he were only *at or about the Table* in any Way or Posture whatsoever. Now, Sir, will you please to inform me, whether your Ministers hold themselves obliged to *sit always*, as our Saviour, they pretend, was *always* in the *recumbent Posture*, or whether they think they may take the liberty, *sometimes, to stand*, as, particularly, at the time of their own receiving,

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(as I have been informed some have done) or all the time they are *Sanctifying the Elements*, making their *Exhortations* to the People, or their *Prayers* and *Thanksgivings* unto God; and whether, in your larger Congregations, where the Communicants are so numerous that hardly, perhaps, a tenth Part can sit at the Table (for, I presume, you have no where more than one) they do not walk about the Meeting from Pew to Pew, distributing the Elements to such of the Communicants as are sitting there. And if they do this, whether you think there be in it any such strict Conformity to our Lord's Practice and Example, as you exact of us. If they ever walk about the Meeting from one Pew to another, with the Elements in their Hands, or if they only stand while they are stirring up the People, or blessing God, these are, according to their own way of Arguing, manifest Deviations from that Example. But if they stand, too, in the *Act of Receiving*, the Deviation must be acknowledged to be still greater.

I come now to the other Objection against Kneeling, set forth above, concerning the *Popery* thereof; and I assure you, Sir, that, in every Part of it, your Friends are greatly mistaken. As to its growing out of the *Doctrine of Transubstantiation*, it is a great deal too old, to have that Original. Nor can it properly be called, on any other Account, a *Papist Ceremony*. It is, indeed, practised, and so is standing and sitting too, on certain Occasions, by one or other, in that Church. One of their Orders, if *Didoclavius* say true^a, and, I think, he would hardly romance to the manifest Injury of his Cause, take the Sacrament, sometimes, *sitting*. And the sovereign Pontiff, at certain times, takes it so, and

^a *Altare Damasc. c. x. p. 746.*

standing, at other Times; and I don't know that he ever takes it upon his Knees. In one Sense, therefore, they are *all Popish Ceremonies*, in another, *neither* of them. They are *all Popish*, in the Sense of their being *all*, at some time, or by some Person or other, used and practised in that Church; and *none of them Popish*, in the Sense of its being an Error, or Corruption, or an Abomination peculiar to it. And as to its serving the Purposes of Idolatry in that Church, it would be, I think, strictly enjoined, and greater Stress than there appears to be would be laid upon it, if it really did. It is so far from being *strictly enjoined*, that it is *not enjoined at all*. There is not one Canon, nor any one Rubric, as we have been assured, in all its Liturgies, and Offices, enjoining it, in the Act of receiving; and from the Diversity of their Practice, before observed, as well as from the Silence of their great Writers, who have treated so largely of the Eucharist, concerning the *right Posture* in receiving, one may fairly conclude, they look upon the Posture as a Matter of no moment. *Bellarmino*, Sir, I have turned over, who seems to have taken in every thing that has any relation to the Eucharist; but he has not a Syllable that I can find about Kneeling at the Time of receiving, no, not there, where he professedly sets himself to enumerate all the Ceremonies of the Mass. I have also consulted the *Roman Catechism*, composed by order of the *Trent Council*, where also there is not a Word about it. And yet, in both, some very minute and inconsiderable Matters, such as communicating fasting, in Unleavened Bread, and Wine mixed with a small Quantity of Water, are treated of, and in one, these Points are enlarged upon, and strenuously maintained. A plain Sign they make little Account of this Posture, in the Act of Receiving, and have no
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mighty Purposes of Idolatry to be served by it; but that all their Purposes of that Sort are thought to be sufficiently answered by the People's falling down before the Host, *when the little Bell rings*, at the *Elevation*, or at *Processions*. At the Time of receiving, the Church neither prescribes Adoration, nor seems to expect it; at least, not the Adoration of the Host: And indeed I don't perceive that it looks for, *at that Time*, any Adoration, whether of God the Father of all, or of *Jesus Christ* in Heaven.

But since we are, Sir, upon ill Purposes to be served by the Posture of kneeling, I must beg leave to inform you, or to put you in remembrance, of some Purposes, not very good ones I hope you will own, that were *really meant* to be served by *sitting* at the Lord's Table. To be then even with you, I must tell you, this Posture grew out of the monstrous Doctrine of Socinus, who, with his Followers, introduced it into the Protestant Churches, and with an horrible Intent of throwing Contempt upon the Divinity of the Lord *Jesus*. For looking upon him as a mere Man, they were minded, it seems, to sit down with him, *as their Fellow*, at his Table; upon which account, *Sitting* at the Holy Table was condemned in very severe Terms, as *indecent, scandalous, irreligious*, and *against the Custom of all the reformed Churches*, and either *standing* or *kneeling* was decreed in two *Polish Synods*. And if one considers the restless Endeavours that have been used to propagate, formerly, *Socinianism*, and more lately, *Arianism*, both of them Heresies in opposition to the Godhead of our Lord, and the Disposition of too many in the Nation to fall in with them, and, at the same time, the universal Abhorrence and Detestation that Bread-Worship is in among us, one may easily see worse Consequences

are likely to follow from the *way of sitting*, than from the *kneeling Posture*.

Since we are upon the Subject of Gestures, it would not, methinks, be amiss to make a short Digression (if indeed it be a Digression) concerning your *not kneeling at public Prayer*, any more than at the Sacrament. Standing at Prayer, in all separate Congregations, is a Posture so universal, (unless some fit) so much *countenanced*, and, on all Occasions, *justified* in the People, that it seems to amount to little less than an *Imposition*. One cannot, indeed, much wonder, that the generality of your People should fall into it. Many do so, in our Churches, where they are taught better. It is confessedly a Posture somewhat more decent than *sitting* at Prayer; and therefore a Posture wherein they vainly imagine they can reconcile some sort of external Regard to the Duty they are about, with their own Ease and Indolence. But that your People should *universally*, the most serious and devout as well as others, fall into it, is surprizing, and can be accounted for no other way, than by the *Countenance* and *Encouragement* that is given to it by your Ministers, who, instead of *reprehending*^a and *remonstrating* against it, say all they can to *palliate* and *excuse* it. The humble Posture of kneeling Nature itself so plainly dictates, and so powerfully prompts us to, that a Man, if he were left to himself, whenever he spreads his Sins and Sorrows before God, or makes his Requests known to him, will hardly do it in any other. The Body,

^a The Rev^d. Mr. Samuel Wesley, who was educated among the Dissenters, and afterwards conformed, declared, that "all the Time he was among the Dissenters, he could not say he heard one Sermon for *external Worship*, or *Decency of Behaviour in God's Service*." See his Reply to Mr. Palmer's *Vindication of the Learning, &c. of Dissenters*, p. 145.

on such Occasions, almost mechanically, and without the actual Volition of the Mind, *falls down before the Lord its Maker*, and scarce ever fails to do so, but when some *affected Restraint* is laid upon it.

Your Friend, Sir, Dr. *Watts*, has given us the whole Doctrine and Theory of Prayer, conformable to the Sentiments and Practices of Dissenters; and he divides it into no less than eight several Parts, to wit, *Invocation, Adoration, Confession of Sin, Petition, Pleading with God, Self-Dedication to him, Thanksgiving, and Blessing of him*. Now, it is easy to see, that Prayer, or speaking to God, cannot properly be done all these ways, in any one Gesture, which, nevertheless, is unavoidable, as your Ministers order the Matter, by blending and throwing them all promiscuously together, in one uniform continued Prayer. But if the whole *must* be done in one and the same Gesture, sure it should rather be that which suits the far greater Part, as Kneeling evidently does, especially, too, when that is much more expressive of our profound Reverence for God, and a stronger Testification, in the Face of the World, of the entire Subjection of our Souls to him. If I might be permitted to be so free, as to suggest to these Gentlemen one Thought, methinks, I would recommend it to their Consideration, whether, since they have, generally, a Prayer after Sermon, as well as before, it would not be best, at one of those times, to use such of these kinds of Prayer as seem to require *kneeling*, reserving for the other such sorts of it as may be performed, not improperly, in the *standing* Posture, and then *stand forth*, and *honestly* tell their People, it would become them to compose themselves to those Gestures, accordingly. Such a Difference and *Propriety* of Behaviour would not, I hope, marr your Worship,

but greatly improve, and add a natural Splendor and Beauty to it. But alas, Sir, I speak in vain. Kneeling, though it be in *Confession*, or when you are under an *uncommon Sense of Guilt*, on account (for example) of National Sins or Calamities, and when *Prostration* itself, if that would be convenient in a public and mixt Assembly, would not be improper, is never practised. And should any one, even you, Sir, *presume* to do it, I am pretty confident the rest would not be *pleased* with you. *Not pleased*, did I say? They would certainly *censure and condemn* you; and I know not, Sir, whether the Superiority of your Understanding, confessed by all that know you, would, in this Case, exempt you from the Imputation of a most *weak and pitiful Superstition*. Neither is this a groundless and unreasonable Suggestion. For one considerable Congregation of Dissenters I can name, whereof there is a Member, who rightly judges it as fit to kneel at her *Public*, as at her *Private*, or *Family Prayer*, and practises accordingly, but to the great *Scandal* of the Congregation, who almost wish she would go over to the Church, rather than continue among *them* to be the Occasion of so great and general *Offence*. This mighty Averseness to *kneeling at public Prayer*, when you always practise it in private, may appear to some perfectly whimsical: But I, who pretend to have studied you somewhat more than every Body has, am satisfied, there is a substantial Reason for it. It is plainly, Sir, a *politic Avoidance* of too much *Symbolizing* with the Church of England. As we kneel at Church, you must not do it at *Meeting*. And if Standing had been a *Church Imposition*, and the general approved way of our Religious Assemblies, you, no doubt, would have taken to *Kneeling*, and been well pleased, as you would have had reason, that the fittest and

most suitable Posture had been *left for you*. It is thought expedient, that *your* Worship should have a *Face different from ours*, tho' it be *much worse*, that so it may *allure and draw in* those, to whose Taste or Humour the external Order of the Church is not so well suited.

And as the total Disuse of Kneeling at your public Prayer is a likely means to draw in some of *our* People, who have no Relish at all of such a Ceremony (perhaps from an awkward rustic Bashfulness, or from some secret Consciousness, that they want that inward mental Devotion which this Gesture expresses, and makes Profession of) so it helps to keep those who have been always with you in a *greater Indisposition for Conformity*. By never having been, themselves, upon their Knees, in their public Assemblies, they contract an Unaptness for it, and a kind of Aversion to it; and never seeing it done by others, no, not by those who are accounted among you the most devout, nor hearing it recommended by your Ministers, they presently conclude there must be, for certain, something that is bad, and, in all likelihood (for 'tis a mighty Word with them, though they know not what it means) some *Superstition* in it. Hence that Lothness to go, even occasionally, to our Churches, where they must either kneel, or appear singular: The former they know not how to bring themselves to, nor do they mightily *like* the latter: Whereas, had they been trained up and accustomed to fall down upon their Knees, at their own public Prayer, they would have been apt to do the same, when they appear, occasionally, at *ours*. This would lead them, almost unavoidably, to *join* in our Prayers; and then the *liking* them, with great Probability, would follow. This, I doubt, is the Danger apprehended, and to be guarded against;

and really Sir, I must tell you, and you cannot but own, it does not look well, but has a scurvy Appearance, to let your Worship be rather debased, than run any Hazard of lessening the Number of your Worshippers.

One may guess, and, indeed, easily believe, you have another Reason for this Conduct. If you were to be taught, and come to think, it was *fit and right to kneel at your Prayers*, you would soon fall into an Opinion, that it could not be *wrong to kneel at the Sacrament*, Prayer being, not only *before and after*, but *during the Time*, and *in the Act of Receiving*, the most proper Business and Exercise of the Mind you can be employed in. And therefore you act, I must needs say, very *consistently and wisely*, in thus making light, and extenuating the Propriety of kneeling in all public Prayer, if you are really determined not to own the Propriety, or to admit the Use of it, in the Lord's Supper.

As to the Propriety of kneeling in public Prayer, the worthy Person last mentioned seems to me in an odd Way of Thinking, touching that Matter. Speaking of the Gestures proper for Prayer, and for each Sort and Occasion of it, *No Posture of the Body* (says he) *is unfit for short Ejaculations, and our Souls may go out towards God, while we lie on our Beds, sit at our Tables, or are taking our Rest, in any Method of Refreshment. And when we say Grace after eating alone, there is no Necessity of rising always from our Seat; but the Custom of standing up is more decent and honourable, when we eat in Company.* In Family Prayer, which is yet a more solemn Performance, he takes it for granted, that *all kneel*; and indeed all Dissenters who keep up Family Worship, so far as I am informed, do. All this, now, is perfectly right; here is a just Gradation in the outward Expressions of Adoration,
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proportioned to the Occasion; and to the less or greater Solemnity thereof. And who, now, would expect that public Prayer should be performed in a less honourable, a less reverend and devout Posture, than that of the Family? And yet so it is, I do assure you. For speaking of public Prayer, the Worship of God in the great Congregation, he comes back again to *standing*, and *thinks it not unfit for this Worship*. However he owns, the kneeling Posture, which he truly says, *the Light of Nature itself, as well as the Rule of Scripture, seems to dictate and lead us to, and has been, accordingly, practised in all Ages, and in all Nations, even where the Light of Scripture never shined, would certainly be a most agreeable Posture for the Worship of God in public Assemblies, if it might be had with Convenience*. Pray, mind it, Sir; it is but *a*, not the most agreeable Posture for public Worship; *one*, as it should seem of the most agreeable, but not the most agreeable of *all*. And, yet, one would think, it must be *the most agreeable of all*, if it be *dictated by Nature, enforced by Scripture, and recommended by the Practice of all Ages and Nations*, as it certainly is, and he confesses it to be.

It will not be denied, that Standing is a Posture that may properly be used in Divine Worship, and sometimes in the very Act of Prayer. But, *of itself*, it is no worshipping Posture, and only the Motions, Actions, Gestures with which it is accompanied make it to be such. It will be also owned, there are many Instances in Scripture of the People of God, or of holy Men among them, *standing in Prayer*; and to make such a Collection of them as some have, and as Mr. Boyse, in particular, has done, is to little purpose, unless it were farther shewn, that these were Instances of such *simple, mere Standing*, as is commonly practised in your Congregations. When
Abraham

*Abraham stood before the Lord, Gen. xviii. 22. to make his Prayer and Supplication to him, when the Levites stood up, Neh. ix. 4. in Prayer and Confession, and other Jews (as they often did, 'tis acknowledged) prayed standing, as the Pharisee and Publican, who went up to the Temple to pray, are represented to do, it is not to be thought, that they only stood, and used no bodily Expressions of Adoration. Nay, it is particularly remark'd concerning the Publican, that the outward Expressions of his Humility and Devotion were very Strong and Vehement. Or when the Primitive Christians stood at Prayer, as every Body knows they did, on the Lord's Day, and at all Times between Easter and Whitsuntide, can we imagine they did no more than barely keep upon their Feet, in a steddly and composed Posture, or that they studiously and even scrupulously refrained from all such Gestures as were naturally, or by generally received Use, expressive of their Devotion? No, surely; that was not the Way of the Church of God, in those Ages. They pray'd with Hands spread, and Eyes lifted up to Heaven. *Illuc suspicientes Christiani* * (says Tertullian) *Manibus expansis, quia innocuis, Capite nudo, quia non erubescimus, — oramus* — There was then, in their Religious Assemblies, not only a greater Decency and Composedness of Behaviour, but stronger outward Expressions and Demonstrations of the devout Affections of their Hearts, than are to be seen even in our Churches. Their Behaviour at Church was truly edifying. One may, indeed, be edified with seeing a Congregation standing at their Prayers, if, at the same Time, one could see, *all over it*, such an outward Behaviour, as could be properly called *Worshipping*: But it would be to me little Edifica-*

* Apolog. c. 30.

tion (I must needs confess) to behold them, although with proper Gravity and Composedness of Countenance, *indolently* leaning upon their Pews, with, perhaps, Hands *loosely* hanging down, Eyes, instead of elevated and lifted up to Heaven, either roving or else fixed upon the Ground, or on the Face of the Minister, as you well know, the general manner (I speak it without Scorn) of your Congregations is: Inasmuch that I am confident, any Foreigner, who should be quite a Stranger to our Language, were he to enter *in Time of Prayer*, would take it for *Sermon-time*, and little think those People were addressing themselves to God, but only listening to one who was addressing himself to *them*. And this, I think, evidently shews, that standing, considered simply in itself, is not an adoring Posture, and much less to be preferr'd to the more humble and honourable one I am contending for.

If this were not so, and those Gentlemen who take it upon them to justify the standing Posture at all times of public Prayer, were not a little conscious thereof, what need had there been to make an Excuse for *not kneeling*, to wit, *the want of Conveniency for it*? This want of Conveniency for kneeling is pleaded by ^a Mr. *Boyse*; and the ^b *good Doctor* pleads the same in the Passage above quoted, and in other Places takes Care to put us in Mind of it. But what sort of *Conveniency* would they have? Have they not as good as our Lord had in the *Garden*, or *St. Paul* upon the *Sea Shore*? And if they want a *Conveniency* for Kneeling with *more ease*, they may accommodate themselves for a Trifle. Or do they want *room*? As to your Ministers, Sir, are *they* so

^a Remarks on the Bishop of *Derry's* Discourse, concerning the Inventions of Men in the Worship of God, p. 174.

^b Guide to Prayer, p. 78.

thronged?

thronged? Do the People intrude into their *Pulpits*, and not give them room to fall down upon their Knees, no, not then, when they are pouring out their Souls before God, confessing their Sins, and the Sins of their People, and supplicating for Mercy, on the most solemn Occasions of Humiliation? And are *all* your Meetings so full, that you, Sir, of the Laity can but just stand upright by one another? Are you, one and all, so pent, as not to be able to bow a Knee unto the Father of our Lord *Jesus Christ*? The whole Church, Sir, sees it is otherwise, and that not only you, but many others in every Congregation, it may be, of much less Consideration than yourself, are not *so* incommoded as this comes to, and have Conveniency enough for Kneeling, if you were minded to make use of it. And such as have *not*, may find it, alas, in *all*, or in *some or other* of our Churches. We have been often told, in excuse for your Separation, the Churches were so full, that you were forced to set up separate Assemblies, or great Numbers must be without any public Worship. But now, it seems, the Case is altered; the Meetings are fuller, and more crouded than the Churches. If so, it is high time, (in your *own* way of Reasoning) *to come back again*, and return to the Church whence you went. — Was there ever such an Excuse as this! I should *smile* to myself to see *some others*, but I am really *concerned* to find *such a Man* as Dr. *Watts* taking up with this pitiful Pretence for a Practice, which is plainly maintained for other Reasons: And I can't forbear making upon it this melancholy Reflection, — *How great and prevailing is the Influence of Party Attachments! And how mighty the Power of Prejudice, sometimes without being felt, even upon devout and excellent Minds!*

I hope,

I hope, Sir, now, you will cease blaming me in your Thoughts, as I know you have been doing, for my Temerity, in thus disturbing the Writings of a Gentleman of so great Name and established Reputation in the literary World. I am, it may be,

Impar congressus Achilli.

But, by this time, I hope you are satisfied, *be*, like that Hero, is vulnerable, *in one Part*, and that I have been fortunate enough to hit it. If he is ever *weak*, it is *there*, and *there*, I think, he is *always*, where he is arguing and settling Points between *you* and *us*. But as he stands, deservedly, so high in your Favour and Esteem, I will no longer tease you with his Slips and Oversights. And indeed, I fancy you are, ere this, pretty well tired with the tedious length of this Epistle, if not also with some other Properties thereof, even worse, and *more insupportable*, than *that*. I will, therefore, here break off, and relieve your *Patience*, for *the present*. But you may expect to hear once more, and that perhaps before it be long, from

S I R,

Your Humble Servant.

F I N I S.

Peterson's Pleasant Dissertations

I hope, Sir, now you will cease blaming me for your negligence, as I know you have been doing for my negligence in this discharging the Writings of a Gentleman of so great Name and established Reputation in the literary World. I am, Sir, very

Yours very truly, R. B. Williams

But, Sir, in this time, I hope you are satisfied, that the History is valuable, in your Eyes, and that I have been fortunate enough to his it. If he is ever come, it is a thing, and I think, he is always where he is writing and writing Points between you and me. But as he stands, belatedly, to high in your Favor and Esteem, I will no longer quarrel you with his Slips and Oversight. And indeed, I have you are, and the party will find with the tedious length of this History, if not also with some other Proposals thereof, even worse, and more tedious, and more tedious. I will, therefore, be quick off, and leave your History for the present. But you may expect to hear of me more, and that perhaps before it is long. I am,

S. I. R.

The Author's Son

P. M. I. S.

The THIRD and LAST
L E T T E R

To a Gentleman Dissenting from the
CHURCH of *ENGLAND*;

W H E R E I N

The Design of the Second (which was to refute the great and popular Objections of Dissenters against Communion with the Church of *England*, and to reflect them back upon themselves) is farther pursued, and completed.

To which is added,

An A P P E N D I X,

Containing some CONSIDERATIONS on the Lawfulness, Expediency, and Necessity of requiring all who are to be admitted to the Ministry, or to any Ecclesiastical Preferment in the Church of *England*, or to be Preachers or Teachers in any Dissenting Congregation, to subscribe the Articles of Faith and Religion; and setting forth the Inconsistencies between the notorious *Practices* of Dissenters, and the avowed *Principles* of many of them touching that Matter.

By JOHN WHITE, B. D.
Sometime Fellow of St. *John's* College, *Cambridge*.

Nolo tale certamen adeas, in quo tantum te protegas, et, torpente dextera, sinistra clypeum circumferas. HIERON.

The FOURTH EDITION.

L O N D O N,

Printed for C. DAVIS, against *Gray's Inn*, *Holbourn*,
and W. CRAIGHTON at *Ipswich*.

MDCCXLVIII.

The Third and Last
L E T T E R
To a Gentleman Dissenting from the
CHURCH of ENGLAND;

W H I T E

The Design of the Second (which was to refute the
great and popular Opinions of Dissenters against
Communion with the Church of England, and
to reflect them back upon themselves) is further
purged, and completed.

To which is added,

An APPENDIX

Containing some Considerations on the Inconvenience
of Excommunication, and Necessity of requiring all who are to be
admitted to the Ministry, or to any Ecclesiastical Office, or
to be Teachers or Ministers in the Church of England, to subscribe
the Articles of Faith and Religion; and setting forth the
Inconveniences between the necessary Principles of Dissent
and the avowed Principles of many of those concerning
the Ministry.

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See the various editions, in the Catalogue of the
Library of the University of Cambridge.

The Fourth Edition.

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Printed for C. Davis, against Gray's Inn, Holborn,
and W. Craighton at Ipswich.

MDCCLXXII

The THIRD and LAST
LETTER,
CONCERNING
The Popular Pleas of DISSENTERS.

S I R,

WHEN I was making an End of my former Letter to you, I let you know, you was to look for a *third* Address; and I am now sitting down, to acquit myself of my *Promise*, or *Menace*, shall I call it. For I can easily believe, I have already sufficiently exercised your Patience with my two former Letters, which were, indeed, extended to a Length I did not foresee at the Beginning of them, not imagining, then, I should have had so much to say to you, as, afterwards, when my Mind was a little warmed with thinking, I found I had. But, now, I will endeavour to be shorter, proportioning the Load I am imposing upon you, to that Measure of Patience, which I can hope you have *yet left* to bear it.

Doubtless, you remember, that, towards the Conclusion of my former Letter, I was vindicating the Practice of the Church of *England* in *kneeling* at the Lord's Table, and retorting the Charge of Imposition, which you bring against it, on that Account; from whence Occasion was taken for some natural Reflections upon the general Practice of your Congregations, in the *avoidance* of *kneeling*, and always chusing to *stand* at your *Common Prayer*. —

O

I now

I now directly proceed to another of our Impositions, as you are pleased to call them, to wit, *the Sign of the Cross* at Baptism, which you complain as grievously of, and as immeasurably decry, as the fore-mentioned; *First*, merely as a Ceremony, which the Church (you say) has no Authority to ordain; but more, *Secondly*, as a *Significant*, or (as your Writers almost always affect to speak, because, I suppose, it is a harder Word, and has a Termination which is ready to fright the common People) a *Symbolical* one, whereby (it seems) it becomes a Sacrament of our own Institution: And by taking *thus* upon us to institute Sacraments, we invade, as you pretend, the Prerogative of *Christ*, whose alone it is to ordain Sacraments in his Church. This, Sir, is the Charge; and being so heavy, it ought, surely, to be supported with the clearest Evidence; whereas, in my Opinion, it may be, with the clearest Evidence, refuted.

Here, let it be observed, as a Preliminary, that the Question is *not* about an inconvenient and cumbersome *Multitude* of Ceremonies, such as all the Offices of the Church of *Rome* are perfectly covered with (for that, on all hands, is agreed to be justly offensive) but only about the Power of the Church to decree a Ceremony, or, if you please, two or three, supposing them always to be such as will become the Dignity and Majesty of God's Worship. And to shew you, it *has* such a Right, I will only ask this Question: The *holy Kifs*, as *St Paul* calls it, or *the Kifs of Charity*, as it is called by *St. Peter*, used in the Primitive Apostolic Church, in the Celebration of the Lord's Supper, was *that* a Rite of *Divine Appointment*, or was it not? If you say, of *Divine Appointment*, I desire to know, by what Authority you and we both have laid it aside. If we have Authority to lay aside a Ceremony of *Di-*
vine

vine Appointment and Ordination, we have, certainly, Authority (for that, surely, is the less) to *ordain* one of our *own*. But if you shall say (which probably, is the Truth of the Case) *not* of Divine Appointment, but only ordained by the Apostles, without any Precept from the Lord, or any particular Direction from the Holy Spirit, a merely Ecclesiastical, prudential Institution, is not this saying, it was ordained by the Church? And since the Church, as a Church, or not considered under the immediate and extraordinary Guidance of the Holy Spirit, has the same Power and Authority in all Ages, the Apostolic no greater than the Present, I can't see, why it should be thought a more unwarrantable Thing, in the *present* Church, to injoin the Use of *the Sign of the Cross* in the Administration of *one* Sacrament, than it was, in the *Apostolic*, to ordain the *Kiss of Charity*, in the Celebration of the *other*.

The Rite or Ceremony just now mentioned, as ordained by the Apostles, and some other Rites which we find mention of in the sacred Writings, as used in the Assemblies of the first *Christians*, were all plainly, significant: And such were always the most approved of in the Primitive Church, as they are, now, in the reformed Churches. The *French* Church, in particular, approved of significant Ceremonies; and *Calvin* appears, in divers Parts of his Writings, to be entirely in the same Sentiments. He, indeed, is so far from making the Significancy of a Ceremony any just Prejudice against, or Objection to it, that he rather requires it, as a necessary Condition of its being Lawfully appointed. The Church of *Rome*, in the abundance of its Ceremonies, has some that are really significant, and some that are *not*. Which of these, think you, Sir, are the most exceptionable or defensible? Whether (for instance)

196 *A Third Letter, concerning the*

the Priest's *smiting his Breast*, when he says, in the Confession of his Sin, *mea culpa*, the Significancy of which is plain and solemn, or his *keeping his fore Fingers close to his Thumbs*, until he has washed them, and his *starting*, as if he was suddenly waked out of Sleep, when, after some secret Orations, he cries out aloud, *In omnia Sæcula Sæculorum*. Ceremonies these, without any Significancy at all, at least, any that is obvious, and which a Man, after guessing a thousand Times, and without the Help of their *Ritualists*, or *Rationalists* (as, belike, they are called) would never be able to find out, and really are good for nothing, but to dazzle the Eyes, and perplex the Minds of the Worshipers. In my Way of thinking, an *insignificant* Ceremony differs little or nothing from an *impertinent* one; but when it has a real Significancy and Meaning, and that Meaning is not only *Natural* and *Obvious*, but also *Important* enough to find a Place in the Office wherein it is used, and *pertinently* inculcated therein, it then becomes *Instructive*, serving to put us in Mind of studying to attain some Grace, or to practise some Christian Duty. True, say you; this is the very Thing that we dislike the Sign of the Cross for, as it makes it a human Sacrament. But I beg your Pardon, Sir, for that, unless you can shew, that we use it, not only as a *Remembrance* or *Hint*, or a *Declarative Sign*, to others, of that Grace of Christian Fortitude, in openly Professing the Faith of *Christ* crucified, which all *Christians* are obliged to, but as a *Means* also whereby that Grace is conveyed, by the Spirit of God, into the Soul, or as a *Pledge* and *Earnest* to assure us, that it shall be, the Sign being duly received, conveyed into it.

Nor are these Arguments of yours against the Sign of the Cross, and all other Ceremonies, more easily

easily refuted than retorted. You are not, methinks, very consistent with yourselves, in condemning *so much*, and raising *such* Opposition to *this* Ceremony, while nothing is said against some *others*. I have sometimes wondered, how the Ceremony of casting Earth upon the Body, in the Burial of the Dead, has escaped your Censure. There is no such Thing as a Ceremony in our Church, or in any Church whatever, if *that* is not one, and a Symbolical one too: Yet I don't remember ever to have met with any Objection to it, in any one of your Writers. And as to your People, they are, generally, (I'm persuaded) so far from being *displeased*, that they are rather *pleased* with it, and think themselves edified by it. And this, I think, I have plainly observed of many of them, when at the Burial of their Dead, where the throwing of *Earth to Earth, Ashes to Ashes, Dust to Dust*, has appeared to me to move and affect them in a sensible Manner, and to have ministred to them a pleasing Occasion for Reflections upon our Mortality. Then, there are the Ceremonies in Marriage. I shall not need to name, or count them up to you. 'Tis very well known, what they are, and that there are more in this Office than in any other: Yet, neither do your Writers, now-a-days, complain of them, nor any of your People, as far as I hear, stumble at them; and whether they do, in their Judgments, approve of them, or whether they do *not*, yet, being determined to go through with them, they seem to think it advisable (as it is, to be sure, the wisest Part) not to say a Syllable against them. Perhaps, you will say, you submit to them as *Civil* Ceremonies; and indeed, I am inclined to think, that you do now, comply, generally, with them, as such. And this Reason of

your so ready compliance with them^a Mr. Peirce gives us. *The Rites and Ceremonies of Marriage* (says he) *we judge, are purely Civil; and so, 'tis the Magistrate's Part to appoint them. — Let the Magistrate prescribe whatever civil and decent Rites he will, to testify and declare the Marriage, Subjects are bound to comply with them.* The Magistrate prescribe! For God's Sake, Sir, how does the Magistrate, *here*, prescribe the Rites and Ceremonies of Marriage, more than the other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church? He no otherwise prescribes them, than as the *Book of Common Prayer, and Administration of Sacraments, and other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church of England* are authorized by Act of Parliament; in which way, *all* the Ceremonies of the Church of *England* are prescribed by him. And if that will make those of the one Sort to be *civil* Rites, and to be, therefore, complied with, why should it not make the other to be such? I wish the Hearts of these Gentlemen would serve them to be as willing to comply with the other Rites, Ceremonies, and Constitutions of the Church, upon just and true Principles, as they are willing and ingenious to frame to themselves erroneous ones, to reconcile their Minds to *these*, which they find it convenient to submit to. The older Non-conformists had other, and, in my Opinion, truer Conceptions of these Matters, considering them as Rites and Ceremonies *Ecclesiastical*, and constantly opposing them, as such. And had we gone about to bear *them* in hand, they are only *Civil*, and prescribed by the Magistrate, which for that Reason no one need scruple; I dare say, we should have been long enough before we could have brought *them* into those Sentiments. “What!

^a *Vindic. of Dissenters*, Part III. c. 9.

“ *civil Ceremonies* (they would doubtless have said)
 “ in the Church of God, in the Midst of the Ad-
 “ ministration of a Divine Institution and Holy
 “ Ordinance, intermixt with Pastoral Exhortations,
 “ Holy Prayers, and solemn Benedictions, strongly
 “ significant and expressive of some Religious Truths
 “ or Duties, which the contracting Parties are
 “ then recognizing, or binding themselves to, and
 “ appointed, because so expressive of those Truths
 “ or Duties.” I’ll venture to say, these Things
 would have appeared to *them*, as I own they do, to
 me, somewhat incomprehensible.

If you are thus inconsistent with yourselves in
 condemning *some* of our Ceremonies, while you
 have nothing to say against, and quietly submit to
others, you are still more inconsistent, in condemn-
 ing them, when, at the same Time, you have divers
 Ceremonies of your own. For such you really have,
 tho’ you seem not to know it. I will point them
 out, therefore, to your Observation.—Few of you,
 I suppose, at this Time of Day, have any Scruples
 about uncovering your Heads, whenever you enter
 either our Churches, or your own Meetings. But
 is not this a Ceremony? I am sure ^b *Calvin* consid-
 ered it as such. And, indeed, *bowing* the Head
 at the Name of *Jesus* is not more a Ceremony,
 than *uncovering* it, at entering the Place of Divine
 Worship, nor, to my Apprehension, more excep-
 tionable. And have you no Ceremonies in Ordi-
 nation? Such of your Ministers as do receive Ordi-
 nation by Imposition of Hands, do, I presume, re-
 ceive it *kneeling*, (at least, I have heard of some that
 have) to signify and express that Humility, Subjection,
 and Lowliness of Heart, with which they receive the

^b Instit. Lib. 4. c. 10. Sect. 29.

Gift of the Presbyterate, then about to be conferr'd upon them, the Ordainer, as in the *French Church*, laying his Hands on, *standing*. And if this be done, as in that Church it is *professed* to be done, to signify, that he acts herein in the Name and by the Authority of God, here are two Ceremonies, and both as significant (since that is the great Fault) as the Sign of the Cross, or any other in our Church.—Again; in the Covenant heretofore much practis'd between you and your Pastors to walk together in Christian Ordinances, I also suspect there are some Ceremonies; but as the Way and Manner of striking this Covenant is pretty much of a Secret, at least to *us*, I can only put it to *you*, who may have, perhaps, entered into it yourself, or, at least, have heard the Ceremonies thereof related by others, whether there *are*, or are *not*. This I am certain of, there was once a *League and Covenant*, with very *solemn* Ceremonies, as *lifting up the Hands to Heaven*, which your Fathers came *heartily* into. And they were made so solemn, that they might be the more affecting, and a stronger Tie upon the Conscience. A plain Confession, by the way, that, in the Acts of Religion, proper Ceremonies are useful to *stir up the dull Mind of Man*, and make lasting Impressions upon it.

Whenever, in any Act of Divine Worship, one particular Gesture is constantly and religiously observed, and, especially, whenever it is observed by Reason of some peculiar Significancy therein, that Gesture, whatever it be, can't be denied to be a Ceremony. By this Rule, you will be found to have one Ceremony at least, in the Administration of the Lord's Supper. I will not insist upon what was *taught at London*, and, in part, *practis'd at*

* See *Dissuasive from the Errors*, &c. p. 122.

Amsterdam by some Independents, at the Time of their first appearing, viz. *That it was requisite for Communicants to participate in the Lord's Supper with their Hats on, as a Rite significant of their Table-honour, and Fellowship with Christ, but that the Minister should be uncovered, in Sign of his Service to the Communicants, as the Lord's much honoured Children sitting covered when they ate of their Father's Meat*, but will confine myself to the Manner and Posture wherein you, now, receive. We all know, this is *sitting*. This you observe constantly, and regularly, as we do *kneeling*, and you do so, for the Sake of a great Significancy that is in it. According to *Calderwood*, this Significancy is, *our Rest, and the entire Accomplishment of all the legal Ceremonies in our Lord Christ*; tho' with what Propriety that Truth should be signified and inculcated in *this Sacrament*, rather than in that of Baptism, or indeed, in any other Office of the Church, I know not. According to ^d *Mr. Cotton*, and his *New-English Independents*, *our Lord made a Symbolical Use of it, to teach the Church their Majority over their Ministers in some Cases, and their judicial Authority as Co-seffors with him, at the last Judgment*: But these, I imagine, will hardly be allowed to be, by your present Ministers, the true Reasons and Significancies of this Ceremony; but their Notion seems to be, that it is *in token of our Fellowship with Christ*, and the great Privilege and Honour we have of Communion with him^e. It is (says *Mr. Boyse*) *most fit to signify our partaking of the precious Virtue and Fruits of the Sacrifice of Christ, and the Honour the blessed God puts upon us, when he admits us to sit down, as Guests, at his holy Table, in Token of our being received into a State of*

^d Way of the Churches in *New-England*, p. 68.

^e Remarks on the Bishop of *Derry's* Discourse, p. 117.

Amity and Peace with him. And by this Significancy (quoth he) *that Posture seems recommended to us, as most agreeable to the Nature of the Institution.* By this we may see, that, if our Church has the Sign of the Cross, your Churches have also *their* Ceremonies, and those too, no less significant than *this*; and that, when it serves their Turn, the Significancy of a Ceremony shall be made its great Commendation, and that, far from a ground of its Unlawfulness, or a Reason for laying it aside, it shall be esteemed a very good Reason for observing it.

But, in the Sacrament of Baptism itself, you have a Ceremony, and a Symbolical one too, I mean, giving the Christian Name to the baptized Party.—Now, I see you smile, as if you thought I was going about to be *nugatory* or *merry*. But I desire you to forbear two or three Moments, and then, if you see Cause, smile on. For my Part, I would not be thought other than very serious in this Argument, which I take to be solid, and to come up to the Point I use it for^f. Your Children, Sir, as well as ours, it is well known, have their Names given them in Baptism: These are called the Christian Names, to put them in perpetual Remembrance of their holy Profession. And Names are chosen, often by *us*, and by *you* oftener, such as signify some Privilege, or Blessing, some excellent Grace, or Duty of the Gospel. You will easily recollect the Names I mean, *Faith, Constancy, Patience, Charity, Praise God, Accepted*, and many more of the like Sort. Tell me, then, Sir, is not the giving the Christian Name, and such, especially, as the forementioned, an *Addition* to the Sacrament? Is it not, too, an *Imposition*? Is it not a

^f See the Case of the Cross in Baptism among the *London Cases*, p. 31.

Ceremony? Would not you call the giving a Name to Bells in their Consecration, according to the Order of the Church of *Rome*, a *vile Popish Ceremony*? And is not this, then, to be called, tho' not a *vile*, yet a *real Ceremony* as well? And is not this Ceremony *Significant*, or, if you please, *Symbolical*? And is it not a Sacrament, an *outward Sign of an inward and spiritual Grace*? As much a Sacrament, Sir, as much an *outward Sign of an inward and spiritual Grace*, as the *Cross* can be pretended to be. If there be any Difference, it should rather seem to be *more so*, because that is given, with *us*, and I suppose also, with *you*, in the very *Act* of Baptizing, while the other is made *after it is over*. And if a Man of a working and distinguishing Head, such as that of old Mr. *Baxter*, were not to think his Time ill employed, and could in his Conscience *dispense* with himself in writing and publishing a Book, to shew, that this is a *human Sacrament* added to that of *Christ's* Institution, and a *most Sacrilegious Usurpation of his Prerogative*, he might be able to amuse the World, puzzle the Cause, perplex and confound weak Heads, convince those who *wanted* to be convinced of it, and, in the whole, discourse upon this Argument with as much *Plausibility*, as any of your Writers have yet done, upon the other.

The Want of a godly Discipline in the Church is also objected, and held a sufficient Reason for separating from it. But if the Want of it was really as great as is pretended, Separation, on that Account, would not be justifiable. And for this I could quote you the holy Scriptures, the Sense and Practice of Antiquity, of foreign Protestant Divines, and their Churches, nay, of the [†] graver and soberer Sorts

[†] The Opinions of *Cartwright*, Dr. *Thomas Goodwin*, *Blake*, *Vines*, and others, even of Dr. *Owen*, and Mr. *Baxter*, that Discipline

Sorts of Puritans and Non-conformists, all positively determining against the Lawfulness of dividing from any Church, for some Imperfections, or some Abuses and Irregularities in its Discipline, or even a total Want of it. But this Way of answering the Objection I shall at present wave, and take another, which seems better to fall in with the Measures I have been pursuing from the Beginning; and that is, representing the real State of our Discipline, from whence it may, probably, appear, there is not in our Church, *so great* a Want of it, as you seem, at present, to imagine, and then shewing that what Want of it there is (and I shall not deny but *that* is too great) it is owing to *you*, in a good Measure, and that *you* really want it as much, *yourselves*. As these Heads contain in them many Particulars, some Enlargement upon them will be necessary. And indeed, I am the more willing to go somewhat deeper into them, because from a Word or two I remember you dropt about Discipline, *the Want and the Disorders of it*, I suspect that Matter sticks not a little with you.

I agree with you, Sir, that the Discipline of the Church is of great Moment towards the Edification of its Members, and that the Fault is unpardonable, when Church Governors let it fall, through a supine Carelessness and Neglect. It is a spiritual Sword put into their Hands, and it will be expected that they bear it not in vain, nor let it rust, and lye by useles, when Heresy or Immorality call for it. The Neglect of Discipline upon Hereticks was the great Crime of some of the Angels of the seven

cipline not being simply necessary to the being of a Church, it is not lawful to separate therefrom for the Want, or for some Irregularities in the Administration of it, may be seen collected in *The Case of Lay-Communion with the Church of England, considered among the London Cases.*

Churches

Churches of *Asia*, for which they stand reprov'd by the Holy Spirit — *Thou sufferest that Woman Jezebel which calleth herself a Prophetess, to teach and to seduce my Servants. — Thou hast there them that hold the Doctrine of Balaam — So hast thou also them that hold the Doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which Thing I hate. — Repent, or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the Sword of my Mouth.* These Reprehensions and Threatnings are severe : Yet it may be hoped, they will not light upon all to whom the Government of Churches is committed, even where there is a great Prostration of its Discipline. For that may be owing to Causes which it is not in their Power to remove. The higher Powers may cramp them in the Exercise of it : And where they are more at Liberty, the Circumstances of the Times may be such as will make it, upon the whole of the Matter, more prudent, and more for the Interest of *Christianity*, to slacken the Reins a little. When the Distempers of the Times are evidently too strong for the Discipline of the Church to contend with, it may be a wise Part in the Governors thereof (at least if the Cause of Religion and Virtue is not immediately concerned) not to enrage them more by a too warm, or discover their own Weakness by an insignificant unavailing Opposition. It is a Censure which *Cicero* passes upon one of the *Cato's*, that by his unseasonable and undistinguishing Rigours, he sometimes hurt the Commonwealth. *Nacet interdum Reipublicæ, dicit enim tanquam in Platonis Pedeisq, non tanquam in face Romuli sententiam.* And when the Decay of the antient Discipline was complained of to the *Roman* Senate, and a Motion made to revive it, *Tiberius* writ to them against it, telling them, it was dangerous to strive against such general and prevailing Evils, and to go about imposing, with a high Hand,

2.

these

those Severities and Restraints which the People had been so long unaccustomed to. And if this related to Matters not absolutely necessary, it was a right Observation. An Age of great and general Corruption seems, indeed, *to call more loudly* for the Restraints of Church Discipline; but then it will not *bear* them: Especially, if there appears, at the same time, in almost all Orders and Ranks of Men, an unaccountable Dislike of all Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction, if both the Tongues and the Pens of Men are let loose against it, and it be grown *Modish* to rail at it. Those who sit at the Helm, when such a Storm rises, and beats hard upon them, will find it, probably, their Prudence, not to bear up against it too much, but give way to its Impetuosity, and ride it out as well as they can, in hopes it will abate, before long, and some unforeseen Cause will make it subside and settle, and *still the Mad-ness of the People.* And yet, in the worst State of things, something may be done towards the Recovery of a more perfect Discipline. *Deus omnia paulatim.* Sudden and violent Changes or Reformati-
 ons in all *Political Bodies, Civil or Ecclesiastical,* as well as *Human* ones, may be dangerous; but Things may be brought about, by insensible Degrees, to the State one desires, and Discipline restored, in a good Measure, by little and little, unheeded in a Manner, and without causing any great Shakings of the Constitution. And may I presume to say, that Church Governors will be obliged to lay hold of every favourable Juncture, and watch all Opportunities to do their Duties, and not make *the Badness of the Times* a Pretence for their Neglect, when, perhaps, *Indolence, Pusillanimity, or Worldly-Wisdom* are at the Bottom of it.

I will not now, Sir, dissemble the Matter: I have been setting forth the Case of the Church of *Eng-land,*

land, and making such Apology as I could for it. There is a Want of Discipline in it, and that is owing in a good Measure to the Causes before-mentioned. Whoever looks into our *Rubricks, Canons, and Constitutions*, will find, *there*, a most excellent Scheme of *Ecclesiastical Discipline*. Yet, let it be owned, that, as it appears in Use and Practice, it does by no means correspond with that Idea the Laws of the Church give us of it; tho' it be, yet, far from fallen into that *deplorable Dissolution*, and *total Disuse*, which your Writers, Sir, would fain make the World believe it is. If *they* are to be believed, every Thing is amiss, every Thing out of Order among us. ^a Mr. Peirce observes, we ourselves lament, once a Year, every *Asb-Wednesday*, the Want of Discipline, and express our Wishes for the Revival of it: Tho' he fears these Wishes are but faint; and *tho' the pious Part of the Clergy earnestly desire it, and, perhaps, carefully endeavour it, yet the greater Part desire it not, but rather hinder all such Designs*. He insinuates his Fears, *that the troublesome divided Circumstances we are now in, are the Punishment of our Sin, in neglecting and destroying Church Discipline, and that God is hereby calling us to restore it*; but, however, intimates his Hopes, too, *that our merciful Father will please, by his holy Spirit, to stir us up to amend it. They long, he says, to see that Day, and pray heartily to God that he would hasten it*. It looks mighty good, and extremely obliging, to use Expressions of such Commiseration towards us, and to pray so devoutly on our Behalf. Only, I have some Fear, all his *Charity* will be *mistaken*, and his Prayers for the Church no otherwise considered, than those of Mr. *Whitfield* for his Opposers are used

^a *Vindicat. of Dissenters*, Part III. ch. 16.

to be, to wit, as *rhetorical Aggravations*, and *artful Heightnings* of the Reproach, to make the wretched Condition of our Discipline appear in the stronger Light. We will, then, see what is the true State of our Discipline, and whether, Sir, your Friends, in Consideration of the Strictness of their own, have any Right to reproach *us* for the Want of it.

Will you be pleased, Sir, to look again into, and carefully consider, the *Commolation*. You will find nothing *there* either *expressing* or *implying* a Want of *all* Discipline. What we there say is *much to be wished*, is only this, *the Restoration of that godly Discipline there was in the Primitive Church, that, at the Beginning of Lent, such Persons as stood convicted of notorious Sin were put to open Penance*. That is to say, we wish it was a practicable Thing, to bring, at the Beginning of *Lent*, all scandalous and notorious Sinners before the Church, and then cast them, continuing impenitent, out of it. The Revival of this Piece of Discipline (which is but one out of a great many) is the whole Matter of our Wish *there*. And as the Church in this Office, so some of the Bishops, in their Sermons, at the very Beginning of the Reformation, complained of the same Thing. Good old *Latimer* complained of it from the Pulpit, before King *Edward VI*, and earnestly moved his Grace, *that there might be restored to the Church the Discipline of Christ against notable Offenders*. But nothing was done in the Matter. This probably, was owing, partly to the Difficulty of introducing the ancient Discipline, and partly to the little Thought that was taken about it: To bring Men back from the *Popish* to the *Primitive* Discipline, at the Beginning of *Lent*, that is, from only whispering their Sins (in Company with the best of their Neighbours, which quite takes off the Shame of the Matter) in the Ear of a Priest, and receiving

receiving from him an Absolution, with some kind of Penance, one, perhaps, of their own chusing, which might be performed by themselves, or by another; to bring them (I say) from *this* to *open and publick Admonitions*, to a *Confession of their Sins* before the whole Church, with Declarations of their *unfeigned Repentance*; may be conceived no easy Thing to be done, tho' it had been zealously attempted. But indeed it was not; not so, as it *might and ought* to have been, tho', indeed, more *here*, than in most *other* Churches of the Reformation. The Thoughts and Pens of all learned Protestants, for many Years, were wholly employed about Doctrinal Matters, exposing the Errors and Corruptions, and taking the People off from the idolatrous, and superstitious Practices of Popery; and there was little Care, especially abroad, about Discipline and Order. *Luther, Calvin, Zuinglius*, and other Heads of the Reformation, writ and preached a great deal against the Church of *Rome*, but did little else. *They did*, as Dr. *Maurice* very justly observes, *the Work of Evangelists, rather than of Governors of Churches*: And Ecclesiastical Polity was so long neglected, that infinite Disorders grew up in them, and threatened them with Ruin. And when they began to set up such a Discipline as they could, in many Places it was [difficultly admitted, and, in some, not admitted at all, but all Coercion was left to the Civil Magistrate. Matters were not in so bad a State here in *England*: For here, the Episcopal Authority, by the good Providence of God, being preserved, a Form of Discipline was also preserved, and kept up, from the Beginning, tho' not always, 'tis true, administered in so perfect a Manner, as might be wished. And our Ecclesiastical Factions and Discontents, *first; then,* the Rebellion and Usurpation ensuing; *afterwards,*

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a general Looseness and Dissoluteness of Manners; and, *last of all*, a Looseness of Principles, as was too natural, ensuing, made it impossible to be carried to any Degree of Primitive Perfection. It may be thought there have been some favourable Opportunities to mend it, if they had happily been seized, and all concerned had been hearty. If there have, they are slipt, and cannot be *now* recalled. At least, the Temper and Habit of the present Times is too evidently such, that it would be extreme Folly to think of doing a great deal, and the Height of Rashness to undertake to revive, especially all at once, all the Rigours of antient Discipline, as you, it should seem, would have us do. Would you have Church-Governors always act like natural inanimate Bodies, never to suspend their Powers, but be continually exerting the utmost Possibility of their Force? Would you have them deal out their Censures at all Hazards, *drive on*, without minding Consequences, tho' the World should be turned up-side down, or *set in a Flame* by it? Certainly, Prudence, which is an Ability to judge, from the Consideration of Times, Places, Things, and Persons, what, upon all Occasions, is best and fittest to be done, and how done in the best Manner, ought to prevail *in all Things*, and in nothing more than in Matters of Discipline and Government. And as you are endowed with an eminent Share of it, you will be, I dare say, of Opinion (I mean, if you will but reflect, and not suffer yourself to be carried away with popular Noise and Prejudice) that an exact Discipline is impossible to be set up, and would do more Harm than Good, if it were, *now*, to be set up amongst us.

The Church of Scotland (as ⁱ Mr. Peirce, at least,

ⁱ Dedication of his *Vindication of the Dissenters*.

tells

tells us) is famed for curbing and restraining Impiety, which elsewhere rages without Controul, and has been sometimes proposed, as a Pattern of exact Discipline for us to follow. I shall not, at present, inquire whether this Character be true. But supposing it to be so, there is so great a Difference in the external State of the two Churches, that neither should be proposed, as a proper Pattern for the other. They in Scotland are so much loved, or so much feared, or, however it comes about, are so happy, as to have the Assemblies of their Clergy always sitting, who can immediately apply Remedies to any growing Evil or Abuse, and keep it from being fixed. They have not been, yet, inebriated with those Notions of Christian Liberty, Liberty boundless and uncontrouled, which have been disseminated among us, in Pamphlets, and Weekly Papers, and (poor Men!) are yet ignorant of their Right to do in Religion whatever they list, notwithstanding the great Pains their Brethren here have taken to shew it them. The general Poverty of the People keeps them more humble, and their Want of the Materials for Luxury (the Source of all our Corruptions here in England) with their living at such a Distance from the great Seat of it, keeps them, I guess, more virtuous and innocent. Then, the Power of their Clergy, which is there suffered, I know not how, to be screwed up into a kind of Independency, makes them more revered by the People, and gives them a greater Influence and Authority over them. All together dispose them chearfully to receive the Yoke of Discipline, to submit to Rules and Orders, to any Restraints, or even Censures, that are thought fit to be laid upon them: While, with us, the most gentle Restraint, tho' it be, too, ever so necessary, shall be exclaimed against, as an insupportable Piece of

Ecclesiastic Pride and Tyranny; every Animadversion upon the Crimes of Men of any tolerable Condition and Way of living in the World, an insolent Triumph over their Quality, which they resolve to revenge, some way or other, upon the Church. Considering these Distempers and ill Humours of the Times, and how much also Vice and Wickedness abound, insomuch that, if all were treated as, by the Rules of the antient Discipline, they were to be, we must interdict from Christian Privileges almost half the Kingdom; considering, I say, these Things, a little *Temper and Moderation*, or (if you will call it so) a little *Slackness* in the Government of the Church, should not, surely, be esteemed so great, and so unpardonable a Fault.

It was thought by most the great Mistake of that Man of *downright unpolished Integrity*, Archbishop *Laud*, that, in his Endeavours to restore Discipline, he did not enough consider the Tempers and Conditions of the People he had to deal with, and what the Times would bear; but, as the noble Historian informs us, *If the Faults and Vices were fit to be look'd into, let the Persons be who they would that were guilty of them, they were sure to find no Connivance, but to be prosecuted to their Shame and Punishment.* You know, Sir, the Sectaries *then* did not like *this*; nay, they pursued him to Death, in a good Measure, on the Account of it. And do you imagine your Party would really like it, *now*? Or that, in case the Church were to pursue the same Measures, they would applaud her for it, and support her in it? Indeed, you are mistaken, if you think so. There is rather Reason to believe these heavy Complaints of our Want of Discipline are made, to goad and stimulate my Lords the Bishops to do as that illustrious Archbishop did, with no good Intention towards us. They plainly

see the Indisposition of the Times for it, and that any high Acts of Church Power would certainly sharpen Men's Humours, *raise* in some, and *increase* in others, a Disinclination to the Church; and then, who can tell but what *has* been *may* be, and what may, at last, turn up, to their Advantage? But to say the Truth, I rather believe they do it, not so much out of Policy, and with a deep Design of drawing us into this Snare, as out of stark Love of finding Fault with the Church, and to increase the Number of *plain Reasons* for their Dissent from it.

They are not, methinks, very wise, I mean wise for themselves, and their own Safety, when they call *so* upon us to revive and restore the antient Discipline. For, by the Rules of *that*, open Schismatics were treated almost as roughly as any Sort of Offenders whatsoever; and this I leave to their serious Consideration. 'Tis more to my present Purpose to observe, that it is not fair (as once *Calvin* complained was *his* Case) *Dissipationem, cujus ipsi causa sunt, probri loco nobis objectare*, to throw in our Teeth that Dissolution of Church Discipline which they themselves are the Causes of. If that be owing to *them* chiefly, it would, surely, be right to hold their Tongues, and say not a Word about it. Indeed Mr. *Peirce* says, *It is not long of us that they cannot govern their own Members*. Yes, but it is *long* of *them*, in a great Measure. For have not they joined their Endeavours with Latitudinarians and Free-thinkers to cry down the Power of the Church? Have not they openly taught, it has no Power but what is merely persuasive, which, properly speaking, is none at all. And does not this Position tear up from beneath our Feet the very Ground and Foundation of all Government and Discipline? *No Authority, no Discipline*, one would think, might pass for a plain and incontestable Aphorism;

phorism; and if the common People are taught the Former, they are not such stark Fools, and so void of all natural Logic, but they can, their selves, infer the Latter. The Consequence is so plain, so easy, so just, and natural, that they may be trusted with drawing it for themselves. I can hardly think with what Face any Person who occupies the Place of a Church Governor, after having maintained, in the Face of the World, that the Church has *no Authority at all*, can go about to do any *Act of Discipline*; or if he has the Assurance (for I really do think it requires some Assurance) to do *that*, how he can expect due Submission from those that are subject to him, or how complain, if he finds them unruly, and disobedient, and not disposed to regard him in any one Thing. For such Behaviour is but the *practical Part* of his own Doctrine. And it is too evident, the present Contempt of all spiritual Authority in *most* of *all* Ranks of Men is, in a good Measure, the baneful Fruit of such Doctrines as these, in propagating which, every body knows, your Ministers, Sir, have had no inconsiderable Share.

But they have ruined Discipline another Way, by the Divisions they have made among us. In such a distracted State of Things as they have thrown us into, an exact Discipline cannot be expected to be preserved. For who will value the Censures of the Church, or who will care for being thrown out of it, while they may be received in other Christian Societies, with open Arms? It is the commonest Thing in the World to hear People openly threaten, *they will go to the Meeting*, if they are not indulged in all their unreasonable Demands, and disorderly Ways; by which Means they often get to be indulged in them. Mr. Peirce says, *We are afraid to reject Hereticks, and other notorious Sinners, from our*

our Communion, lest they go over them. No, we are not afraid to reject *such* from our Communion, for *that* or for *any* Reason; but, perhaps, we may think it both a *prudent* and *charitable* Part rather to overlook some Things that are not very gross, which yet might deserve some Animadversion, than that the People should leave the Church, and become Schismatics, and so involve themselves in a Sin of a much deeper Dye than their other Offences were. To allay our Fears of losing Hereticks, and other scandalous Sinners, from our Communion, he assures us, *those Fears are causeless, for they should admit no such to their Communion, unless they mend their Manners.* What does the Gentleman say? No Hereticks, no *Arians*, for instance, in your Communion! No scandalous Sinners, no *Fornicators, Adulterers, Drunkards, Revilers, or Extortioners*, received into *your Churches*! I must beg your Pardon, if I am not satisfied of *this*, and *demur* upon it. For I could never perceive the Doors of the Meeting were ever shut against any, but that all Comers were welcome. And if such profligate Persons be not admitted to *sit at the Lord's Table* (which, in all likelihood, they will not desire to do) they need not fear being admitted to all the other Parts of your Worship.

But what if, Sir, after all, it appears, there is as great a Want of Discipline in *your Churches*, as in the Church of *England*? It may be reasonably supposed, the Doctrine beforementioned must have upon the Members of *your Churches*, as well as of *ours*, some Influence to make them less tractable and obsequious to your Discipline, than they might otherwise have been. And why, too, may it not be supposed, *you* are as much afraid to censure *your People*, as *we ours*, for fear they come over to the Church? I am sure, *you* have, I should have said *your Ministers* have, one Reason to be more afraid

of censuring, or *any way* disobliging them, as they depend *more* upon their Number, and Benevolence. This reasoning, I own, is of no Weight, if the Fact be found otherwise, as indeed, Mr. *Peirce*, in the Book before quoted, says it is. And to shew it is, he has given us as hideous a Representation of our Discipline as he well could. But ought he not then to have given us *some* Representation of *your own*, that it might have been seen, upon a Comparison, *which* was preferable? But not a tittle of that, I assure you. Indeed, he does say, (and saying is all, which is very easy) you have a *deal* of Discipline. For he asks, *Why do not they use as much Discipline, as they see we do? Why do not they, as well as we, keep Hereticks, and profligate Sinners from their Communion?* As they see we do! For my Part, I see it no more than your People, Sir, I believe, feel it. He must be *second sighted* who can see any such Thing. Where is it, Sir, to be *seen*? Not, I am sure, in Use and Practice. Have you, then, any Book of Discipline? Where is that to be *seen*? No, indeed, you seem to do all without Book, as if you thought any Scheme or pre-composed Form of Church Discipline as bad a Thing as a Form of Prayer. An exact Account of your Discipline, we should be mighty glad to *see*. We have long wished for it, but I fear we are yet like to go without it. It will hardly be thought adviseable to expose all your Church-Dealings to publick Canvassing and Examination. Yet, as he has mentioned your keeping *Hereticks* and *profligate Sinners* from your Communion, and piqued himself so much upon those Accounts, a few Thoughts shall be bestowed on each.

It must be owned, you have a short and easy Way to come at heretical Ministers, and eject them. Let but the People withdraw his Pay, and the Thing is done at once. I mean, Sir, if the People
continue,

continue, themselves, in orthodox Sentiments, for otherwise, it cannot be expected they should dismiss him, and the Heretick is fixed immoveably in his Post. Or if you think it more *Decent* and *Ecclesiastical* to have it done by the Interposition of neighbouring Ministers, it may be done, without much Difficulty, *that* Way. For the Heretick, when he appears before them, cannot intrench himself behind *Forms of Law*, nor take Advantage of the dilatory Proceedings of all legal Courts: But, as your Churches have not bounded themselves by any Rules which may not be departed from, they may proceed against him in a summary and arbitrary Way; and there is none to whom he may appeal against their Sentence and Determination. This, we will say, is an Advantage you have for getting rid of Hereticks, in a quick and easy Way. But what doth it signify, if no body can tell who are Hereticks? You know who it was, (one of yourselves) who openly asserted such a Notion of Heresy, as makes it impossible for any, besides God and themselves, to know, who *are* Hereticks; and who can doubt, but it was done with Intent to screen and protect them from all Censure? This, at least, must unavoidably be the Consequence and Effect. For if his Notion of Heresy be *right*, there is no doubt, but it would be *wrong* to call any Man Heretick, and much more to prosecute and censure him, as such, unless God, the Searcher of Hearts, should reveal, or himself confess, that he maintains his Opinions against his Judgment, and under the Condemnation of his own Mind. And if he confesses *that*, it will not be much Harm *he* can do; and it would be pity he should be pursued, or any way molested, as a *Heretick*, but begging him for a *Fool* would be the most reasonable Treatment of him.

Before this Notion of Heresy was so publicly defended, you *did*, indeed, fall pretty foul upon a
few

few whom you esteemed Hereticks: You turned them out of their Pastoral Employments; and so far, I readily own, you acted laudably. But I have not heard you went any farther, or that you *turn'd them out of your Communion*, as Mr. Peirce would have us believe you *always* do. And if you did suffer them to *continue still* in your *Communion*, you have not so much, as Mr. Peirce pretends, in point of Discipline, to boast of. Mr. Peirce himself, it seems, was one of the Gentlemen who received this Discipline, on Account of *his* Heresy about the Trinity; and 'tis worth while to know how he behaved under it. Why truly, Sir, not at all like the Man who had been calling, before, so loudly upon the Church of *England* to reject all Hereticks; who laid such a Load of Reproach upon it for its Slackness and Remissness, and set such a high Value upon *your* Churches for their Care and Diligence in that Matter; but rather like one who held it unwarrantable to molest any, on such Accounts: For all the Proceedings against him he was pleased to call *Violence, Tyranny, Persecution, an Inquisition as true as ever there were any in Spain or Portugal*, as may be seen in the Pamphlets by him published, on that Occasion. This, Sir, is *he* who had writ, a very little while before, *Why do not they use as much Discipline, and keep Hereticks from their Communion, as they see we do?*

The Disputes among the *London* Ministers, at the same Time, about Subscribing or not Subscribing, the first Article of the Church of *England*, and the 5th and 6th Answers of the *Assembly's Catechism*, concerning the Doctrine of the Trinity, will not be soon forgotten. Those who were for Subscribing considered, generally, the other, as *Arians*; and it is, from their Writings, too plain, that many of them really *were*. And *these*, on the other hand, considered *them*, as *Atbanasians*, that

is to say, as *great Hereticks*, in their Opinions, as they, *themselves*, were reputed to be by *their* Adversaries. Yet I do not remember there was much *ejecting*, or *rejecting* among you, on that Occasion: But by the Help of *Comprehensive Principles*, and of some pacific Treatises, such as *The conciliatory Letter*, *The Apology for both Parties*, *The Doctrine of the Trinity no Fundamental*, &c. together with a little Reflection upon the Danger of ruining the Dissenting Interest by your Divisions, Matters were brought, at length, to an amicable Accommodation, each Party receiving, as Brethren, and running into the Embraces of the other. Such Hereticators are *you*, Sir! Such is the Rigour of *your* Discipline! and so it is you *turn Hereticks out of your Communion!*

As to notorious evil Livers, it no way appears to me, they have any Reason to be afraid of greater Molestation from *your* Discipline, than from *ours*. *Excommunications*, I suppose, are not very frequent among you: *Authoritative Admonitions* before the Church, for great Scandals and Offences, are as little heard of; and a *public Penance*, in one of *your* Congregations, would be, I presume, a new Thing to behold. Our Country, Sir, you know, abounds with Dissenters of all Sorts; and tho' I have lived in it the greatest Part of my Life, yet, to the best of my Remembrance, no one Act of Church Discipline, in either of those Kinds, has ever been reported to me, or come, any way, to my Knowledge, tho' I have known many who deserved it, and some who did as richly deserve the severest Exercise thereof, as the incestuous *Corinthian*. Which I mention, because I know you are all apt to say, there is not much need of Discipline on Account of *disorderly and offensive Walking*, in *your* Churches. Formerly, perhaps, it might be so; but now, *Toleration, Ease, Security*, and a *ge-*
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neral overflowing of Luxury in the Nation, have brought Things between *you* and *us*, as to the Strictness of our living, pretty near a Level, as I have shewn more at large in my first Letter, which I refer you to.

Here then I shall rest the Matter: There is, in our Church, a Want of Discipline confessed; but there is an *equal* or *greater* Want of it, tho' not so ingenuously confessed, in *yours*. *We* have, at least, the *Shadow* of it, which, I doubt, cannot be said for *you*. All the Forms of it, to be sure, (and that is something towards its Revival and Restoration) are kept up among *us*; and we trust in God, *these dry Bones will*, one Day, *live*, and that by his Holy Spirit's working, in his good Time, upon the Minds, especially, of those who have it most in their Power, and are more properly concerned, these Forms will be animated with such a vigorous Exercise of that Power which God has given to his Church, as will reasonably well answer the End of it.

Vain, indeed, and visionary are these Hopes, if what you say be true; for you say, the whole Frame and Constitution of the Church must be taken down, and one of another Sort erected, before a regular Discipline can be introduced. But God forbid we should be reduced to such an unhappy Alternative, that either Foundations must be removed, or we must, for ever, be content with our present State of Discipline, and that general Relaxation of it which it now lies under. Let us then see whether the Case be really so bad; whether the present Constitution of our Church will not *admit* of good Discipline, and whether your Churches are *better calculated* for it.

You assert, there is no Possibility of an exact Discipline in Diocesan Churches; and the Reason of this extraordinary Assertion is no better than this, that 'tis impossible one Bishop should Personally in-
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spect and take the Cognizance of all Things and Causes that arise within a large District: a Reason that holds as strong against all Governments, Civil as well as Ecclesiastical, that are of any Extent. And how much stronger is it against the *British* Monarchy, which contains, in *England* and *Ireland*, almost fifty of those Dioceses, besides a large Country of Presbyterian Ground at home; and many large Provinces of the *American* World. Doubtless, you will say, the King governs the Realm by subordinate Magistrates, who are Sharers of his Power. And does not the Bishop rule his Diocese *so*? And why, Sir, *may not* that be? Mr. *Baxter*, I think, allows he *may* substitute another to toll the Bell to Church. So far, he is very good, and we thank him for it. But may he do nothing else *per alium*? Whatever is done besides, must he needs be, in *propria Persona*, the Doer of it? For what Reason, I pray? What is there in *Episcopacy* more than in *Royalty*, that none of the Powers of it *can* or *ought* to be delegated, but every Thing must be done by the Bishop only, or, however, under his *immediate* Inspection? at least, why must a *Bishop* have an *immediate* and *personal* Concern, in every Thing and Matter that is done, more than an *Apostle*? For it is evident, St. *Paul* had not. He tells the *Corinthians* (1 Cor. i. 17.) that *Christ* sent him not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel. The former, it seems, was not *so much*, and *so immediately*, his Work, as the latter: And therefore to *this* he almost wholly applied himself, leaving *that* to others, whom he had appointed over that Business. And he, accordingly, tells them (thanking God for it too, so far was he from thinking it any *Neglect* or *Failure* in his Duty) *he had baptized none of them but Crispus and Gaius*, tho' he had lived there (and we may be sure was not idle) a long Time, and

and (as appears from *Acts* xviii. 8, 10.) made many Converts in their City.

The Pretence of the Impossibility of good Discipline under Diocesan Episcopacy is perfectly groundless and unreasonable. For, surely, there *may be* good Discipline wherever there *may be* good Laws, and a due Execution of them. And why both *may not be* in Diocesan Churches, I am at a Loss to comprehend. It will hardly, I think, be denied by the stoutest of you all, but, that good and wholesome Laws *may be* made under Diocesan Governments; and those who, in Subordination to the Bishop, are to execute those Laws, or any of them, *may*, of themselves, do it, as conscientiously, as he himself would have done; and such as are negligent of their Duty he can compel to it.—If this, Sir, does not satisfy, (as I think it may) we have plain and undeniable *Fact* to appeal to. The Discipline of the *Primitive Church* you must allow was *good*; else, why is the *present Church* reproached for the Want of it, and called upon *so* to restore it: And yet this was exercised under Diocesan Episcopacy, and where the Dioceses, too, were sometimes as large as most of ours are, which learned Men, whom I could refer you to, have abundantly demonstrated. Here, then, we have an *Argument against Fact*, which every body knows, and *common Sense* will teach us, is worth nothing. For if it be certain, a Thing *has been*, all the Arguments and Speculations in the World will not be convincing that it *cannot be*.

But be, Sir, this Matter as it will, I do not see how it is mended by the *Presbyterian Platform*, wherein the Exercise of Discipline, in most Cases, is *wholly resolved*, in others, *ultimately resorts* to certain Assemblies of the Clergy. The Constitution of the Church of *Scotland* is, I suppose, truly Presbyterian; but, in that, I perceive, the *Kirk Session*,

sion, or *Parish Consistory*, which is composed of Ministers, Elders, and Deacons, judges only in Matters of lesser Scandal; and in these, too, there lies an Appeal from *them*. All Matters of greater Scandal, such as *Adultery, &c.* are left, in the first Instance, to the *Presbytery* of the Place, and from these also is an Appeal to the *Provincial Synods*; as, from these Synods, there is a *farther Appeal* to the *general Assemblies of the Clergy*. The General Assembly, therefore, has, you see, the Cognizance of all Causes whatsoever that arise within the Church of *Scotland*; and that, you know, is of equal Extent with a good Number of our *Dioceses* put together. 'Tis like, you will say, *that Assembly* is made up of *many*. My Answer is, they *all* stand upon the *same Ground*; and if forty Men are placed together upon an Eminence, they cannot see farther than any one of them may, provided his Eye-sight be as good as that of the rest.

But why do I speak of *Presbyteries, Synods, and National Assemblies*, when we have, I suppose, no such Things in *England*? For tho' we have Churches which are *pleased to be called Presbyterian*, these are govern'd as absolutely (for what I can see) as the rest, by their own Officers, the Pastors and Elders of the Church, from whom there is no Appeal to any proper superior Jurisdiction, which is the very Essence of Independency. Let us then see, if the Independent or Congregational Plan be better calculated for good Discipline: And I doubt it will be found, that, if, in *Diocesan* Episcopacy, the District is *too large* for good Order and Discipline to be kept up in, in *Congregational*, it is *too small*; if, in the former, the Governors and Governed are *too far off*, in the latter, they are as much *too near*.

The Plan of Independency is, that every Congregation or worshipping Assembly has a complete Jurisdiction,

Jurisdiction, and is entirely govern'd within itself. Here, now, is a Croud of petty independent Jurisdictions, fifty, and, perhaps, more, nay, an hundred, or, as it may happen, several hundreds, within the same Walls. For (say your Independents) any six or seven covenanting together will make a Church completely organized; three or four composing the *Presbytery*, and the *Fraternity* consisting of three or four more. A very pretty Constitution! A Constitution, which must produce continual Dissentions, Dissentions too without Remedy, and, as such, was condemned by the *French Church* in the third *Synod of Charenton*^k, where it is declared *not only prejudicial to the Church of God, (because as much as in it lieth, it doth usher in Confusion, and openeth a Door to all Kinds of Singularities, Irregularities, and Extravagancies, and barreth the Use of those Means which would most effectually prevent them) but also is very dangerous to the Civil State, as forming as many Religions as there are Parishes, and particular distinct Assemblies among them.* It is almost unavoidable but each of these Congregations will have some singular Opinions and Practices of its own, which falling immediately under the Eye and Observation of all the neighbouring Congregations, will be extremely offensive to them, from whence Controversies and perverse Disputings will naturally arise. And how shall they be ended, there being no Authority that can silence, or censure the Contumacious? Synods may meet, and talk over the Matter, and give their *bumble Advice* upon it: But, by their common Principles, (for they are all, Sir, you know, *absolutely independent* of each other) none shall need to submit to them any farther than they think fit.

^k *Quick's Synodicon.*

As to Offences that may arise within their particular Congregations, 'tis own'd the Independent Constitution lodges Authority enough in the Church and the Officers thereof, to take them away, or reform them, if they were but disposed to use it, and the People equally disposed to submit to it. Every Parish or Congregation has as much Power as *the Sovereign Pontiff himself*, in Spirituals; indeed a great deal more than is fit to be put into the Hands of such Persons, as 'tis commonly entrusted with. The Plenitude of Ecclesiastical Power is too great a Trust to be committed to every Teacher, Elder, and Deacon, or indeed to every Pastor or Minister of God's Word, and particularly (to say nothing of those, who in advanced Years are rash, or weak, or indiscreet) to every young Divine, who nevertheless, in hopes of future Proficiency in Knowledge, and Increase of Experience, may be trusted, as in our Church, with the Function of Preaching, and Administring Sacraments to a Congregation, under *the Guidance and Controul of another*. Here, the Parish Priest has as much Jurisdiction as is convenient and reasonable he should. He has a Power to admit all to Baptism who are entitled to it. He has also as much Power as any Presbyterian or Congregational Minister, to repel open and scandalous Sinners from the Lord's Table, only *signifying* (which, surely, is but reasonable) *to the Ordinary*, and that only, *if he require it, or any Complaint be made, the Cause thereof, and obeying therein his Direction*. No Excommunication of his Parishioners can take Effect, without his Concurrence. But to put the whole Power of Excommunication into *his Hands*, would be as unreasonable and of as ill Consequence, as to give the Mayor of any mean Corporation an absolute Right to deprive, at Pleasure,

any Member thereof of the Benefit of the Laws, and put him out of the King's Protection.

Considering, then, how great an Authority the Pastors and other Officers of these Churches have, a Man would expect a very great Regulation of Affairs, that all Things amiss should be rectified, all Abuses removed, and that no Person deserving Animadversion should pass unreproved, or uncensured. But, alas, there are many Things that hinder; as, *First, the great Dispersion of their Flocks.* These Gentlemen, Sir, your Ministers, are great Pluralists: Their People commonly live here, below in the Country, dispersed through ten or a dozen Parishes, and these, too, in *Ireland*, and some Parts of *England*, Parishes of great Extent. Above, they are scattered through every Part of the great Cities of *London*, *Westminster*, and the *Borough*; and it may be reasonably supposed, there is hardly a Parish, nay, scarcely a Street or Lane, but sends some of its Inhabitants to help make up your larger Congregations. And hence it is that your Pastors have little more Knowledge of a great Part of those who embrace their Ministry, and attend their Preaching, than any Methodist Preacher has of those who, from all Parts of the Town, flock after him, and are hardly more capable than *he* of watching over their Conversation, in a *pastoral* Manner.

But, suppose their Flocks were collected, and had their ordinary Habitations, as in the establish'd Church, within parochial Bounds, and they had, under their Eye, and more immediate Observation, all manner of Persons and Offence they are concerned with, it may be fairly supposed, they will be pretty indulgent to such of their Flocks as may stand in need of Reproof, or deserve Censure, by Reason they so much depend upon their Benevolence, often, perhaps, for their whole Maintenance.

Or,

Or, if they have *Fortitude* enough (which I will charitably suppose many have) to cast behind them all Considerations of that Sort, they will be often kept from exercising Discipline with an impartial Strictness, by their Foresight of those Heats, Ruptures, and Confusions, and that Estrangement of their People's Affections, which it will naturally occasion. And if it be ask'd whether this Consideration will not equally impede the Exercise of Discipline in Diocesan Churches, I answer, *No*; because it is human Nature to bear the Severities of Discipline from their Spiritual Pastors *at some Distance*, with more Patience and Resignation, than from their *immediate Guides*, by whom they expect, tho' indeed often without Reason, to be *always* treated with the *greatest Indulgence*, and led with all the *Gentleness* in the World.

Then again, it is well known, there are always many of your Churches without *proper* Pastors, having no other than some young Men, who are *Candidates* for the Ministry, to pray and preach *before* them, till they have some Evidence of the Acceptableness of their Gifts. May these, Sir, take upon them to *rebuke*, and *to rebuke with Authority*? No, certainly; they have no Authority at all. May they presume to censure, or excommunicate any? By no Means; these are Acts of *Pastoral Power* and *Jurisdiction*, not to be attempted by mere Probationers, not until they have been ordained, and solemnly called by some Congregation to take the Pastoral Charge of it. 'Tis therefore evident, that as long as they continue in the *probationary* State (and we are well informed, that is, sometimes, for many Years) there can be *no Discipline* in those Churches.

As to Lay-Elders, the other ruling Power in many Congregations, (for in *some*, it should seem, by *Heads of Agreement* in 1691, there were not any,

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as 'tis like also there are not now) here and there one, it may be, proud of his Office, and fond of the Power it gives him, may be busy enough in it. But for the generality, we may partly judge, by the Disposition of our Church-Wardens, (who are commonly Men of the same Rank) and that *Reluctancy* they often discover in making their Presentments, notwithstanding they are bound by their Oaths to do it, that, if they live in Amity with their Neighbours, they are not like to be very severe upon them; especially, if they are not only *Neighbours*, but also *Kindred*, or *good Customers*. But if there be any grudge between them, then the Censures of the Church will be in Danger of being *prostituted*, to serve the Purposes of Ill-will, Malice, and Revenge. At least, those that suffer under them will be apt to suppose, and give out, that *so* it is, whether it be, or not. Hence they will slight those Censures, grow refractory, unwilling to submit, and the more so, if these Elders happen to be Persons of mean Endowments, and small Experience, as, in many Congregations, they must be supposed to be, or much inferior, on all Worldly Accounts, to those whom they exercise Dominion over.

*Tune Syri, Damæ, aut Dionysî filius audes
Dejicere è saxo cives, aut tradere Cadmo?*

If any little Tradesman or Mechanick of a Lay-Elder should take upon him to call *you*, Sir, to Account for any Offence he should pretend you had given, I am ready to think, that, with all your Humility, you would be apt to spurn him, in those Words of our old Friend *Horace*, or some other like them; and look where you will, I am pretty confident you will find *Fact* exactly corresponding with my *Theory*.

But to proceed: We are not only charged with the

the *Want* of proper Discipline, but with *great Faults* in the Discipline we have. I will mention two or three. That Jurisdiction which (say you) ought to have been in the *Parish Priests* is often put into the Hands of *Lay-Chancellors*. Now, who would have thought that ever a Charge of this Nature would have been exhibited by any *Dissenter*, by one of those who have evidently taken much larger Strides in this *Sacrilegious Usurpation*, this *Profanation of a most dreadful Part of Christ's Government*, as, I think, one of you calls it, than this amounts to? If *Lay-Chancellors* had been allowed to take upon themselves *settled Cures*, and to officiate therein, it would have been a thing that might have deserved some declaiming. And yet, as much as this do you, permitting Men to occupy the Place of Pastors, in *settled Congregations*, to preach and pray constantly *before* them, sometimes, (as I noted before) many Years together, before their *pretended Ordination*. The Power of the Keys is also exercised in another-guise Manner by *Lay-Elders*, than by *Lay-Chancellors*. They are both pretty much upon a footing as to Scripture Warrant and Authority; and yet, your Lay-Elders, in the Plan of Presbyterian Church-Government, are an essential Part of all Consistories and Synods. They sit in them, and have an equal Vote with the Pastors, in all Business, both in the making of new Laws, and executing the old. Jointly with *him*, they *suspend* from the Lord's Table, they *excommunicate*, and they do it, too, by a Power which is supposed *inherent*, and properly their *own*; whereas *Lay-Chancellors* act by an Authority derived from the Bishop, and, in the Matter of Excommunication, only declare, as *Civilians*, what is Law, the Sentence being pronounced, as well in Court, as at Church, by Ecclesiastical Persons. — After all, there may be,

perchance, some Irregularity on both Sides. On *yours*, it is never like to be taken away; on *ours*, it is taken away by *most* of my Lords the Bishops. And if it *never* be by *all*, I would desire to know, how it comes to pass, that *we* should be held so *guilty* for admitting the Jurisdiction of *Lay-Chancellors* in our Ecclesiastical Courts *only*, while *you* are perfectly blameless in not only allowing a much higher Jurisdiction of Laymen in your very Consistories and Synods, but of Lay-preaching and Lay-praying also, in your publick Congregations, which, without question, is a much greater Abuse and Profanation.

You must be sensible, Sir, that this Charge may be fairly retorted upon *your Churches* of *all* Denominations, even those that are *called* and *are* Presbyterian, (if, indeed, there *are* any such among you) but, in a more particular and especial Manner, upon those of the Congregational way. For *these* not only *connive* at the *Practice*, but openly *maintain* the *Right* of Lay-preaching and Praying, and Lay-ordination too. Nay, the whole Power of the Keys, according to *them*, is *originally* in the Lay-People, and they, accordingly, exercise, as there is Occasion, every Part of the Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction. What Right, Sir, have *these* to reproach the Church (they are the last Men in the World that should reproach her) with her Lay-Chancellors, and to talk of a Profanation for only being assumed by the Bishop, not to do any Act that is *purely Spiritual*, but only to be his *Assistants* in his ecclesiastical and judicial Proceedings?

We are also, it seems, accountable (which is a little hard) for those *Prohibitions* with which our Discipline is sometimes embarrassed, and such other Restraints and Modifications thereof, as the *civil Powers* have been pleased, in some Cases, to lay
it

it under. For these we are twitted by Mr. Peirce, who, jeeringly, tells us, *it is not owing to you, but to the Constitution of our Church, that we can make no Ecclesiastical Laws without the Consent of the Government.* It is well, Sir, for you that you can. But why then do we see none of your making? And I would know, too, whom it is owing to, and whether it be not owing to the Constitution of Presbyterian Churches here in *England*, that they have no Presbyteries, Synods, and Assemblies. In his Dedication to the Church of *Scotland* of this very Book, wherein the Church of *England* is so upbraided, and insulted, for submitting to be limited by the Civil Powers, in making Ecclesiastical Constitutions, he has some distant obscure Innuendo's (as it appears to me) about this Matter. He talks there of a *Design* about the latter End of the last Century, to set up a general Correspondence among Dissenters, such as the Quakers have practised for many Years—*of the ill Usage and Cavils of their Adversaries, of representing them as Despisers of the King's Power in Spirituals*, which he gives as the Reason *why the Order of their Churches is not more agreeable to that which is in Use in Scotland, and other reformed Churches.* Methinks, Sir, a little *Eclaircissement* is needful in this Place: But if it be meant, as it seems to be, of a Design to set up Presbyteries, and Synods, which the Government would not permit them to do, here is *submitting* (since *Submission* is such a *criminal Thing*) to *Limitations*, and *Prohibitions*, on *their* Parts. But whether it be true, or not, that the Government will not permit them to have Synods, and other regular Assemblies of their Ministers, the *Fact*, that they have them *not*, is evident. And that must be owned, by all true and genuine *Presbyterians*, a far greater defect in *their* Churches, and a fouler Disgrace to *their* Discipline,

than any they can name in *ours*. For such Assemblies are the *Characteristicks*, and constitute the very *Essence* of *Presbyterian Churches*; and for *them* to be without them is much the same Thing, as for *Episcopal Churches* to have no Bishops.

This Gentleman, Sir, has been pleased, too, to shew some of his *Smartness* upon another Article of our Discipline, to wit, *the Commutation of Penance*, which (to say true) many Conformists, as well as he, have been offended at, and the more, I presume, for not well understanding the Thing, and the Reason of it. It is a Privilege sometimes indulged to Persons of Condition, to redeem themselves from the Reproach and Shame of publick Penance, by a Sum, which is distributed to pious and charitable Uses: And this, if not *strictly* and *ecclesiastically* right, may yet be thought defensible, in the present State of Things. Mr. *Peirce* says, *it is turning Penance into a Money-business*. Well, be it so: Yet this *Money-business*, or (to speak out of *Sarcasm*) this *pecuniary Penalty* may have its use, and do some good. The levying a Shilling, according to the Statute, on any Person who does not repair to Church every Lord's Day, we may call, too, if we please, a *Money-business*; yet I have never heard, *that* Statute incurred the Displeasure, or fell under the Censure of any Dissenter, but have always thought *you* esteemed it a good Law, as *we* do, for securing the due Observation of that Day; few being willing to pay down, perhaps, the whole Earnings of one of the six Days, to purchase an absence from Church, on the Seventh. When a Man is obliged to pay down, for his Crimes, a greater Sum than he can well spare, it will make him take heed how he brings himself again into the like Snare, and help more to make him alter his Course of Life, than *looking Shame in the Face*,

Face, in a public Assembly, would be like to do. For tho' that, too, many have a good Effect upon some Sorts of Offenders, as well as be a Terror to others that are yet innocent, it would be apt to make other sorts of them, particularly, the Rich, and, especially, if they were proud and high-minded too, as the Apostle insinuates they are all apt to be, on account of their Riches, only the more impudently and desperately wicked. — However, this Sort of Punishment must be allowed better than none at all, and letting Offenders escape, as, I suppose, Sir, is commonly done among you, without Penance or Commutation either.

As to the antient Discipline, I am free to own, it did not allow of *Commutation*; and Mr. Peirce is much in the right, when he observes, *Ambrose was ignorant of it, when he forced the Emperor Theodosius to confess his Sin publicly in the Church.* Yes, truly, in those Times, the Rich and Honourable, as well as the Poor and Base, had Humility enough to submit to Ecclesiastical Censures, nor thought it a Thing beneath their Dignity and Rank to make an open Confession of their Sins, and to seek the Peace and Reconciliation of the Church, with Tears. And when it is so here in England, I shall not stick to say, "Away with Commutations, nor let them be named among us." — I shall only add, these Commutations are entirely retrospective, and only Punishments for Offences, which Men have formerly committed, and, perhaps, have since repented of; and if they go on in their Sins, no such Favour, I hope, is ever allowed them, a second Time.

You have other Objections which may be as easily, as those I have already considered, retorted upon you. Shall I mention the Ceremony (as your Writers love to call it) of the *Surplice*? Or, shall I pass

I pass it by; supposing you are now ashamed of *the great Controversy of the Habits*, and have resigned all your Scruples about *this*, in particular? I almost fancy you have; but if you have *not*, you may be pleased to remember the *Ceremony* of the *long sweeping black Cloak*, peculiar to your Ministers, which is esteemed by *you*, and used by *them* as an Ecclesiastical Habit, for the Sake (you own) of its Significancy of Gravity, as the Surplice (you say) is used by *us*, for its being significant of Purity of Life, tho', by the bye, the Church has no where declared it to be used, on any such Account.

But the reading of certain Apocryphal Books in our Churches, while some Parts of the Scripture are omitted, to make (as you call it) Room for them, and even the binding them in the same Volume with the Scriptures, is, still, a Matter of mighty Offence. The binding them together makes them look (you think) as if the one was written by Inspiration of God, as well as the other, and of the same Authority with it. And yet the Common-Prayer is often found under the same Cover, while no body takes it (I dare say) to be the immediate Word of God, ever the more for *that*: Nor does any one take the Hymns and Doxologies that have sometimes been printed and bound up with the Psalms of *David*, for the Use of Psalmody, in *your* Churches, as well as *ours*, to be as Canonical, as those Psalms. I think, we have a Collection of Hymns and Spiritual Songs upon a great Variety of Divine Subjects, and some, particularly, for the Lord's Supper, composed by Dr. *Watts*, which he has bound up together with his *Paraphrases* or *Translations* of certain Portions of Scripture, for the Use of your Congregations, and the Improvement of the Psalmody thereof. Now, do your
 People,

People, Sir, esteem those of his own Composure of the same Authority with the other, because he has thought proper to bind and publish them together? And, as to the reading the *Apocrypha* in our Churches, for *Example of Life, and Instruction of the Manners* of the People, I know not why it should not be held, on all Accounts, as justifiable, as singing the Hymns and Songs of that Gentleman, for the Increase and Furtherance of their Devotion". That Gentleman, I perceive, does not fall in with the *Taste and Inclination of those who think nothing must be sung unto God, but the Translations of his own Word*. And therefore, one would think he could not readily fall in with *their* Taste and Inclination, who would have nothing read to the People, besides the Translations of God's Word. And if some Part of Canonical Scripture be omitted to make room for reading the Apocryphal, so it is, (and, I think, with less Reason) to make way for singing the Hymns and Spiritual Songs beforementioned. If certain useful and instructive Parts of the *Apocrypha* are read, while long Genealogies, mysterious and obscure Prophecies in the Canonical Books, which the Learned themselves are puzzled with, are omitted, this is plainly done for the better Edification of the People, which you, who hold it right to forsake the Communion of the Church, only for better Edifying, could not (one would think) be displeased at. And the same may be said for omitting, in the Course of the Lessons, some other Holy and Canonical Scriptures, for Instance, the Song of *Solomon*, the reading of which, in a mixt and popular Assembly, by reason of its parabolical Turn, and peculiar Phrase, might be attended with some Inconvenience". Mr. *Peirce*, I perceive, is for its

^m See his Preface to Hymns and Spiritual Songs, p. 10.

ⁿ *Vindicat. of Dissenters*, P. 3. c. 13.

being

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being read, because, I suppose, the Church has *not* appointed it to be read : And if it *had* done so, I am pretty confident (such was the Temper and Spirit of that Gentleman) he would have been as much against it, and called the Synod^o, in his jeering way, a *wise* Synod, which had made such an Order and Appointment. We should, then, in all likelihood, have been told, that the greatest Part of all popular Congregations would certainly rest in the plain and literal, and never carry their Thoughts into, or reap any Advantage from the allegorical and spiritual Meaning of that Divine Song; that it would, therefore, be apter to cause disorderly Motions, and to provoke Mirth in light and unsettled Minds, than to excite Attention and Devotion; and we should have been, doubtless, put in Mind of that Order among the *Jews*, that none should read it, even in private, till they were Thirty Years old.—After all, it is not very seemly, or consistent, in this Gentleman and his Brethren, to censure the Church of *England* for not publicly reading the *whole* Scripture, if what is commonly said be true, that, in some of their *own* Congregations, *hardly any at all* is read, and little, comparatively, where any is. Mr. Peirce himself can't but acknowledge, ^p and does, that, *setting aside the Psalms, Epistles, and Gospels, more Scripture is read in two Months in our Churches, than is done in a Year, in their largest Meetings.* Only he says, they read them more in their Families, which may be true or otherwise, for what either he, or I know; especially, now-a-days, when Family Prayer and reading the Scriptures are not so much used as heretofore, ^q and a greater Degeneracy in Proportion, in

^o *Vindicat. of Dissenters*, P. 3. c. 13. ^p *Ibid.*
^q *Warr's Humble Attempt*, p. 223.

these Respects, is reigning and visible among you, than your conforming Neighbours. And it should be remembered, too, how many Families there are of the poorer Sort, who have no Bible to read at home, and cannot read it, if they had.

Keeping the *Feasts and Fasts* of the Church is another Stumbling-block in the Way to Conformity; when, too, it is notorious, that, in the Church of *England*, no body, now, need keep them, unless they chuse it, and that the Way of keeping them is neither more nor less, than going to Church to say our Prayers, to commemorate some of the special Mercies of God towards us, in regard to our Redemption, and to hear the Scriptures read relative thereto, and to praise God for the Doctrine and Examples of his holy Apostles, and other Saints, who were the glorious Instruments of conveying the Knowledge of *Jesus Christ* to us. One would wonder how any intelligent Dissenter can be offended at *this*, more than he is at those Days of *Solemn Thanksgiving* to Almighty God for his Mercies and Blessings of a temporal or civil Nature, or even those *Lectures*, that are weekly, or occasionally preach'd at your Meeting.—And as to keeping the Festival of our Lord's Nativity, which has been more particular objected to, you seem not to have, now-a-days, so far as my Observation reaches, *any Scruples at all* about the *feasting Part*, which is certainly the most exceptionable, but come as *cheerfully* into it, as your conforming Neighbours, and only *stick* at the *Religious*. And you stick at *this*, it seems, because you are not certain our Lord was born on that Day on which the Church celebrates his Nativity. But see, Sir, your Inconsistence and Partiality.—In the second Century, there was a great Controversy between the Eastern and Western Churches, about the *right Day*

Day of keeping Easter. *This Mr. Peirce calls 'an idle Contest, and Mr. Chandler ' says, it is a Controversy that appears at first View to be of no Manner of Importance.* And whenever any of your Ministers have Occasion to speak of it, they represent it after the same Manner, and never fail to slur the Fathers of the Church, as a Company of simple, unreasonable, and perverse Men, for raising such Stirs, and making a Schism about so poor a Point as keeping Easter on *this*, or on *that* Day. But, how comes it, then, to pass, that their keeping Easter on a *wrong* Day was so *small* a Matter, if our keeping Christmas on a *wrong* (supposing we really do) is so *great* a one; and how are those Fathers to be blamed for contending and making a Schism about the former, if you, and your Brethren are without blame, when you justify your Schism by the latter?

I trust now I have plainly shewn you, that your most popular Arguments against Communion with the Church are insufficient, and, besides, that they equally press against Communion with your own Churches: And the Matter, as one would imagine, might be safely rested *here*. But there may be, perhaps, one Scruple or Difficulty behind; and tho', from the Tenor of that just and reasonable Declaration you made to me, which gave occasion to *this*, and the *former* Letter, I should hope it would be no Difficulty with *you*, yet, for fear it should, and lest it should rise in your Mind, as a Retreat and Subterfuge to avoid Conformity, when you are fairly beaten out of your other Holds and Fastnesses, it may not be improper to say to it just

^r *Vindicat. of Dissenters*, Part 3. ch. 11. p. 226.

^r *Mr. Chandler's Hist. of Persecutions*, p. 25.

so much as may be thought sufficient either to prevent, or to remove it.

The Scruple or Difficulty is, *the Danger of giving Offence, by Conformity, to weak Brethren.* When the Vulgar and more ignorant Sort of Dissenters plead *this*, they mean no more by giving them Offence than making them *angry*, or putting them *out of Humour*, or, at most, *grieving* them, or giving them some *Trouble* or *Concern*, which (they say) by *all Means* should be avoided. No surely, not by *all Means* avoided; not (for Example) by *offending* God, in doing ought that is contrary to their Duty, or neglecting to do ought that Duty requires of them. Let us go and learn this Lesson, that we are to *please*, as well as *obey God*, rather than *Man*. In the mean while, it is Matter of Wonder, that, since they are so afraid of offending *Men*, no Consideration at all should be had of offending *us*, their Brethren of the Church of *England*, who are, unquestionably, *many more in Number* (tho' we may not perhaps, pique ourselves so much upon account of our *Weakness*) and, 'tis like, are as much *grieved* and *concerned*, if not quite so *angry* and *displeased*, at their *Non-conformity*, as their Dissenting Brethren could be, at their *Conformity* to the Church.

As to you, Sir, (I dare say) you have no Scruple of this Sort; I mean, no Fear or Apprehension of offending, in *this* Sense of offending, by your Conformity, but are as much (as indeed all should be) above the Fear of displeasing any Man what soever, by embracing the Communion of the Church of *England*, when you shall come to think; it is, in itself, a right Thing to do so, as you are above the Weakness of imagining, you ought to continue, rather than displease, in your present Separation from it. The true Scripture-Notion of *Offending* you are not, I suppose, unapprized of: It is neither
more

more or less than setting a *Trap*, or *Gin*, to ensnare any one, or laying a *Stumbling-block* in his Way, to occasion his falling into Sin; and I can easily conceive how *you*, or any Man of Sense, may inconsiderately fall into an Opinion, that, by his Conformity, some weak *Christians* may be led, or drawn into Sin. A Gentleman, like *you*, of considerable Sway, Authority, and Influence in the Place where he lives, or a Minister in great Reputation and Esteem, may conceive, that his Conformity to the Church would be a Hurt to Religion, that many who had before a high Opinion of his Wisdom and Integrity, seeing his Compliance, which they might hold to be sinful, and perhaps, also, suspect to proceed from other Motives than a real Conviction of the Lawfulness thereof, might be thereby tempted, and the more easily reconciled, to give way, upon occasion, to sinful Compliances in *other* Instances, and, perhaps, also, in *the very same*, conforming, as *he* does, without having received the same Satisfaction concerning the Lawfulness of it which *he* has; which would be a Sin. And I verily believe some of your Ministers themselves keep off from the Communion of the Church, and go on in the Way of Separation, meerly upon this Scruple. They could well enough conform, but do it not, lest People should be scandalized thereat, and Religion receive Damage: And if, among these, there should be found *one* of distinguished Learning and Abilities, as well as other Merit, who would not wonder, and be grieved at it?

It is not, indeed, a new Thing for the greatest Men (as if they were under some Enchantment) not to know how to get out of certain particular Tracks of thinking, tho' they be ever so evidently and palpably wrong, and that the Way of think-

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ing which these Gentlemen are in, is thus palpably wrong, you will soon be (I hope) made sensible. You don't think it, I suppose, a thing *scandalous in itself to live* in the Communion of our Church; and when 'tis considered, that *you say, yourselves*, you differ little from the Church in Matters of Doctrine, but only in Ceremonies and external Rites, I hope it will not be thought any great Matter of Offence to *come over* to it. And, indeed, why it should be thought a greater Offence for one of *you* to come over to *us*, than you esteem it for one of *us* to go over to *you*, I can't readily comprehend. I could never observe, that any Conversions from *our* Church to *yours* were a Grief to you, or that any of you ever *discouraged* them, for fear of their *giving Offence to weak Consciences*; but, on the contrary, have always observed, they were Matter of great Satisfaction and Content, and always the greater, by how much the Persons were more eminent and considerable in the Church, and their Change (consequently) likely to prove more scandalous. Which evidently shews (as one would think) you have no great Notion, that a *bare* Change is any reasonable Occasion of Offence. Circumstances, I allow, in particular Cases, may be such as shall make it so, as when one conforms with manifest Views of Covetousness, or Ambition, or any other Views of a like Sort. But, in the Case of most private *Christians*, and particularly your own, there is little room for any such Suspicion; and where there is more, as perhaps there may be in the Case of Ministers conforming, if they are really apprehensive of any such Offence being taken at it, it may be, methinks, easily prevented by publishing the Reasons for their Conformity, and openly declaring (if they intend to keep their Words) they will not accept any Dignities or Preferments in the Church so much

above the Value of what they enjoy at present, as a reasonable Man can suspect was a Temptation to them, or any Motive and Inducement to their Change. And if they think not fit to lay themselves under any Limitations of that Sort, as being conscious of Abilities to do God eminent Service in the higher Stations of the Church, with a sincere Desire and full Purpose of Heart to do him the best they can, and shall be, by his Providence, and the Favour of their Superiors, called to them, I know not why they should decline them, seeing it is in their Power to prevent any Scandal from ensuing, by a constant and regular Conformity, Diligence, and Faithfulness in their high and holy Calling, an humble un-aspiring Mind and Temper, a Conduct on all Occasions perfectly disinterested, and an exemplary Life. And if, Sir, you will look about you, you will see Instances *, more than one, of Gentlemen who have *thus* conformed, who, far from scandalizing any by their Conformity, enjoy their Preferments and high Stations in the Church with the Applause, and live in the Esteem and Veneration of *all*, even of *those whom they have deserted*. And what *these* have done, *others*, certainly, *may* do, if *they* also conform upon *Principle*, and with the same *Purity of Intention* to serve God in the sacred Ministry of this Church; and any other than such we desire to have nothing to do with.

As to offending many, who may be moved, by the Opinion they have of you, to follow your Example, there really appears to me little Room for any *Fears and Apprehensions* of that Nature. For your People, Sir, whatever, in other Respects, they may be, are not observed, in this, to be like Sheep,

* Bishop of O——d, &c.

that, when one leaps the Fold, the rest follow; but, on the contrary, when any eminent Member, or learned Minister of your Churches comes to see he has Reason, and does, accordingly, resolve, to conform, the People, tho' they had before the highest Opinion of his Wisdom and Goodness, and implicitly relied upon his Authority, generally turn *their Backs on him*, and bid him go take *his own Course*, while they pursue *theirs*, and few follow him, unless it be *with Censures and Reproaches* for his leaving them. These are the only Sins which his Conformity is like to lead them into; which, however, *they*, and not *he* must be answerable for. But if more were to follow his Example, I really think, Sir, it would be so much the better; *and heartily wish to God, you were, all, offended, after that Manner!* For if his Authority were to draw you after him, that would be so far from a *real* Offence, that it would be the very *reverse* of it; so far from *leading* you into Sin, that it would plainly be *plucking* you out of it. And indeed, whoever of you comes to be satisfied in his Mind of the Lawfulness of Conformity, and to think it his Duty, can do no less than endeavour, and take all Opportunities to satisfy others of it, and if he has been, any way, the Means of *perverting* them to, or *strengthening* and *confirming* them in their Non-conformity, he is bound, in Duty, to take *some Pains* to bring them off from it. I am, aware, you will say, you are only afraid of their following your Example, *against their Judgments*, and with a *doubting Conscience*. But be easy, Sir, I entreat you, upon that Head. For 'tis as well, and indeed better, they should follow you to *Church*, whither they ought to follow you, with a *doubting Conscience*, than, *with the same*, follow you to the *Meeting*,

ing, whither they ought not, as some in all probability, *now* do; who either moved by your Authority, or influenced by the Hopes of recommending themselves to you, or the Fear of displeasing, and losing the Share they may already have in your Affections, keep off from the Church, which, otherwise, they would have resorted, and adhered to. Either way, (you see) by your Conformity or Non-conformity, some or other *may be* offended; and, in such a Case, what is your Duty to do, but to conform, if, upon other Accounts, you think *that* right? leaving Contingencies and Possibilities, which you can neither foresee nor prevent, and are not, therefore, answerable for, to the Care and Consciences of others who may be immediately concerned in them.

I must not dismiss this Head, without reminding you of one great *Scandal* which is *really given* by your Non-conformity, or those unhappy Dissensions that are kept up by you amongst us. They are a mighty *Offence* to *Jews, Turks, and Infidels*, and give them unworthy Thoughts of our Holy Religion. And those among ourselves who are disposed to think meanly or dishonourably of it, how do they triumph in them, and with what Pomp and Aggravation set them out to the World, as if they really thought them a sufficient Disproof of *Christianity* itself, or, at least, a legitimate Prejudice against it? And the *Papist*, in regard to the *Religion of Protestants*, makes the same Use of them that the *Free-thinker* does, in reference to *Christianity in the gross*. The one *will* not be a *Christian*, because *Christians are so divided*; and because Protestants are *so divided*, the other *will* be no Protestant. He is always counting up, with Pleasure, our Heresies and Schisms, and from thence arguing, that his Church is the one Catholic and Apostolic Church,

Church, and there *can be* no other. No less a Man than the late Monsieur *De Meaux* argues, at this Rate, against no less an one than our late excellent Bishop *Bull*. *Is the Catholick Church* (says he) *a confused Heap of Societies, separated the one from the other? And how can they be that Kingdom of Christ not divided against itself, and which never shall perish?* And *Truth* (says ^a another, tho' not so great as he) cannot possibly be among us; for *Truth* is but *one*, and when Men have deviated from *that*, the Maze of Error is infinite. Our Divisions are set forth, too, as the just Judgments of God, for having forsaken the Communion of his Church; and as this Church and Nation is the chief Support, and strongest Sanctuary of the Protestant Religion, it is (*quoth he*) more lamentably divided than almost any other. In this Manner (vain Man!) *he* argues; and no one thing, I am persuaded, has helped more to confirm those of *his* Church in their old Errors, and given them more unconquerable Aversions to our Religion, than our Dissentions have: As, on the other hand, nothing has more helped to unsettle the Minds of some of our own People, and make them Converts to Popery. And, accordingly, it was observed, that, in the late miserable Times, when the Church of *England* was removed, and an innumerable Spawn of Heresies and Schisms of various Forms and Hues covered the Land, not a few, and, of these, some of no mean Rank and Quality, or of no small Account for Learning, scandalized at our Divisions, went clean off from the Religion of Protestants to that corrupt Church, as the only Place (they thought) wherein they could hope to find either Truth, or Peace. I beseech you, Sir, *by the Mercies of God, and in*

^a *Milletiere.*

the Bowels of our Lord Jesus Christ, lay these Things seriously to Heart. Consider the Mischief you are doing, by your Dissention, to our Holy Religion, and to the Protestant Profession in particular, which you always express so tender a Regard for; and when your Mind is forming to itself imaginary Dangers of some People's taking Offence at your embracing the Communion of the Church of England, for God's Sake, reflect, that, by your separating from it, you do really give an Offence that is infinitely greater, and more mischievous.

And now, Sir, I flatter myself it plainly appears to you, and will to any other candid and unprejudiced Dissenter, into whose Hands these Papers may happen to fall, that this Scruple or Difficulty also is both easily answered, and retorted. And therefore I hope you will now think of acquitting yourself of the Promise you gave me, *that you would and should think it your Duty rather to conform to the Church of England, than join yourself to any separate Congregation, in case the common Arguments against Conformity could either be fairly answered, or fairly reflected.*

It was a Pleasure to me, to hear a Gentleman talk of *the Duty of Conforming* in any Case, as it shews, he is not got into the modern, latitudinarian, fashionable way of thinking, that there is no such Thing as *Duty* in relation to that Matter, but that every one is as much at Liberty (without any regard to Terms of Communion) to be of what Church he pleases, as he is to go to what Tavern, or be of what Club he likes best. No wonder, that Libertines and Rakes, who commonly make their Religion (what they have of it) out of their own Heads, should fall in with and embrace such a Notion: But we find it embraced by many who

regard the Bible, as the Rule of their Lives and Conducts; and abundance of Pains is taken, more especially by those of *your* Way, to give it a Currency in the World. It must be confessed, 'tis a Notion admirably calculated to serve the Purposes of all *Gatherers of Churches out of Churches*: Tho', methinks, too, the Notion is not very compatible with that Zeal and Industry they commonly discover in carrying on that Work; for, if all Churches and Communions are indifferent, I know not why any one should give himself the least Trouble in making Profelytes from one to another; and, if he believed in his Heart they *really were* so, you may depend upon it, he would *not* do it, unless Avarice, Ambition, Faction, or some other worldly Interest were at Bottom.

I make no Question but you have often heard it said, as I sometimes have, *that no body will be ask'd what Church he was of at the Day of Judgment*. Surely, a very strange Saying! For, most certainly, it *will* then be enquired, not only how we have lived and behaved, as Men, but also, how we have behaved as *Christians*, as Members of the Church, and Subjects of the Kingdom of *Christ*.—Suppose I should go about to seduce you, or any other Gentleman, into Treason, or actual Rebellion against his Majesty, in Favour of a Pretender to his Crown, and, for reconciling your Conscience to it, should tell you, you need not fear involving your Souls in any Guilt, and endangering your Salvation, for that *no body will be ask'd what King he was for at the Day of Judgment*, would not you be ready to fly in my Face, as a profligate and abandoned Casuist, and very unfit to have the Care of Souls? Yes, you would: Now, there is just as much Sense, Honesty, and Divinity, in bearing you in hand, that *it will never be enquired, in that Day, what*

Church you were of, to make your Conscience easy in the way of Schism. And whoever shall attempt, under such Colours as these, to entice Men into Treason, or Rebellion, on the one hand, or into Schism, on the other, must be a Man either so weak, or so wicked, as to be very unfit to have the Direction of Mens Consciences.

We have known Scripture, most absurdly and ridiculously quoted, in Support of that Notion, *viz.* to shew, that no body need be concerned about *this* or *that* Religion, and less still, *this* or *that* Church, or Communion of *Christians*, but only provide for a good Life; as, particularly, that Declaration of St. *Peter*, *In every Nation he that feareth God, and worketh Righteousness, is accepted of him.* No doubt but whoever fears God, and works Righteousness, as Cornelius *did*, will be accepted, as Cornelius *was*; that is, his Righteousness will recommend him to God, may be a Means to procure him some farther Grace, and, perhaps, to bring him, - if he be a Gentile, as it did that *Roman Soldier*, to the Knowledge of the Truth, as it is in *Jesus*. Or, if it be supposed that *Acceptance unto Salvation* is here meant, I shall move no Controversy about *that*, provided the Phrases *fearing God, and working Righteousness*, be but interpreted fairly, in their just Latitude and Extent, so as to take in walking in *all* the Ways of God's Holy Laws, and *all* the Works of his Commandments. For *so* interpreted, they will not fit those who break one of his first and great Commandments, by sowing Dissentions, and causing Divisions and Offences in his Church. — But I see I am running, and that needlessly, from my Subject, there being, I am satisfied, no Danger you will ever be caught into an Opinion of the Indifferency of all Churches and Communions, by so crude a Saying, and such a palpable

palpable Misapplication of Scripture, in Support of it, as I have now mentioned. All the Danger is of your falling rather into the other Opinion, of the Necessity of separating from any Church, as particularly ours, for slight and insufficient Reasons, too weak to bear the Weight and Strefs of such a formal and total Separation, as is laid upon them.

Since I have happened to pass this Censure upon the Insufficiency of those Reasons, which are commonly urged in Justification of your Dissent, and pronounced them *too weak to bear the Strefs that is laid upon them*, you may, perhaps, be desirous to know, what really *is*, in my Opinion, sufficient to justify such a Separation as yours is; nor shall I be unwilling to add a Word or two, for the farther Explanation of my Sense of that Matter. I am not, Sir, afraid to assert, that nothing will justify your Separation, but the imposing of sinful Terms of Communion *upon the Laity*. *Upon the Laity*, I say again, that you may remark it. *You*, Sir, who are Laics, may very honestly and conscientiously come to Church, and say your Prayers with *us*, whether the Gentlemen, your Ministers, *could* or could *not* make the usual Subscription and Declaration, or take the Oath of Canonical Obedience to the Bishop, and whether they *had*, or had *not* Reason to refuse it. 'Tis evident, *you* have no manner of concern in those Things. And if those who *would be* Ministers hold it unlawful to comply with them; they may let it alone, and betake themselves to some other Profession, or way of Life, wherein they may eat their Bread with a quiet Conscience, and Gladness of Heart, and not be disquieted with Remorse, either for complying, on the one hand, with the Conditions of Ministerial Conformity, against their Judgments; or for disturbing, on the other, the Peace of the Church, for the
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Sake of a Maintenance. No body, Sir, goes about to compel these Gentlemen to enter into the Ministry: No body *wants* or *desires* them to do it. We are enough, of ourselves, to answer all the Wants and Occasions of the Church; or, if more Labourers were wanting, we could have them, and such, too, as believe and contend, that the Terms of their Ministerial Conformity are lawful, and may be very conscientiously complied with. And as to those who are already in the Ministry among you, let them shew their Christian Fortitude in trusting to God to provide for them, while they attend our Churches in the Character of Laymen, as they well know many of the old Non-conformists, their pretended Fathers, and many also of our Clergy lately did, when they could not comply with the State Oaths that were required of them, in order to the Exercise of their Ministry; and not cover themselves with the Pretence of a *Wo unto them if they preach not the Gospel*, which has no Relation to *their* Case. And this, surely, tho' it were ever so inconvenient on any worldly Account, rather than make so fearful a Schism in the Church, it is their Duty to do, unless they believe that the Terms of Lay-communion are sinful also. But this I don't perceive is pretended. On the contrary, Dr. Calamy himself expressly says, *The Terms of Communion with the establish'd Church are not pretended to be sinful absolutely*. All he contends for is, that they are so *respectively*, or by Reason (as I suppose he means) of present Circumstances and Conjunctures. But, surely, those Circumstances and Conjunctures must be very extraordinary that can justify such a Schism, upon account of Things which, all the while, are confessed to be *materially* lawful. At this rate, they may make any thing, or whatever they please, unlawful. For 'tis only saying, that in regard to
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Circumstances and Conjectures (which Imagination will easily frame and invent) or by reason of the Temper of the present Times, the State of Things, or Disposition of Persons, they hold it necessary, or very adviseable to oppose it. And when it is once thought adviseable to resist and oppose it, complying with it, be sure, will soon be a Crime, and presently commence *respectively* sinful.

In the Enquiry, therefore, whether the present Separation be justifiable, I look upon all to be impertinent, and quite foreign to the Business in hand, that does not, or is not pretended to shew, that the Church requires, as a Term of Communion, of the Laity, something that is sinful. And would your Ministers proceed in this way, let them write on, in the Name of God, and spare not. But heaping together a few Matters, which are only, perhaps, inconvenient, or of small Use, but are not pretended to be sinful, or any way destructive of Salvation, and proposing *them* to the People, as a sufficient Ground for their Separation, is a most *unreasonable*, an *unscriptural*, and *uncatholic* Proceeding. It is not enough, to say, there are in the Church some Defects, some Abuses have grown up in it, and *this* and *that* might have been ordered better than it is. This may, possibly, be the Case, in some few Particulars, in our Church, as, doubtless, it is in all other Churches, and, among *them*, in your *own*. And if it be, you are welcome to use your Endeavours, that those Defects may be supplied, or Irregularities reformed. But, for God's Sake, Sir, let it be in a Christian and peaceable way; I mean, with keeping in the Communion of the Church; and that, I'll venture to say, would afford you greater Opportunities and Advantages, and give you more Power and Influence than you can now possibly have for bringing about the Regulations

gulations you desire, and, in all likelihood, be, at last, if they are fit and reasonable, a Means to effect them. But whether those Things be ever regulated, or not, People are not to be taught, that a few such Matters will justify your Separation in God's Sight. This Doctrine, I must take the Liberty to say, is *false and dangerous*. And to teach it, is just the same Thing, as if you were to collect and put together some of the common Errors and Miscarriages of Government, or a few unequal and inconvenient Laws, and made a Book of them, and then call it, *A Vindication of your withdrawing your Allegiance from his Majesty, and taking up Arms against him*.

That the accumulating small Defects and Irregularities, (often only *imaginary* ones) is your common and most approved Way of attacking our Church, and justifying your Separation from it, is evident from your Books, and particularly, from your *Plain Reasons for Dissenting from the Communion of the Church of England*. This is the Way and Manner of that Book; which, nevertheless, by the many Impressions it has had, one may easily judge is approved by the Body of Dissenters, as a just Vindication of your Dissention. The supercilious Ignorance of its Author, in divers Particulars, has been properly chastised, and sufficiently exposed in a small Pamphlet lately published. Several of his Reasons I have already retorted upon yourselves; but there is yet one which I have, methinks, a great Inclination to take some Notice of here, tho', perhaps, it may be out of Place, as I have given you, before, some hopes of having made an End, and said the utmost I could against you. For we Letter-writers, Sir, have a Privilege, which I have, at this Time, a Mind to claim, of setting down our Thoughts as they offer themselves,

selves, without scrupulously adhering to strict and close Method. He has, then (I say) one Reason, which it may be proper to take Notice of, because it labours under the same Misfortune with those I have before been considering, being *weak* in itself, and yet, with the *little Force* it has, recoiling upon the Reasoner's Head, — *We leave* (says he) *the Communion of the Church of England, because, it has often shewn a persecuting Spirit.* 'Tis well he can't say, it has shewn a *dividing* Spirit, and *actually divided* itself, by an open Schism, from a sound Part of the *Catholic Church*, and that, too, establish'd by all the Authority in being. That, indeed, would have been an unanswerable Reason for your Dissenting, worth all the rest in his Book. But what intelligent *Christian*, or sensible Man would ever say, that its *having often shewn a persecuting Spirit* was a *plain Reason* for your dissenting from it? Did the Church persecute, at any Time, its own Members? Were you, or your Fathers ever persecuted, while they continued in the Church? And were they driven out of it by those Persecutions? Was their being persecuted, the *Cause* of their Separation, and not rather the *Effect* and *Consequence* thereof? Or is it meant, that its having, in *former Times*, persecuted *others*, was a sufficient Cause for your leaving it *now*? Its having been *formerly* severe upon those that are *without*, is that a Reason why those who are *now within*, should go out, and forsake its Communion? I take upon me, Sir, absolutely to deny, that its being *now* (if it really was) of a persecuting Spirit, or its *actual* Persecution, *at this very Time*, of any, is a sufficient Ground for any one's renouncing its Communion; nor would I renounce the Communion of the very Church of *Rome*, solely on account of its Persecutions, great and many as they *have been*, or may *now* be, and
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if its manifold Idolatries, and other Terms of Communion, downright sinful, which it imposes upon all, *Laity* as well as *Clergy*, did not oblige me to it. But our Churches having *formerly* (if it ever did) *persecuted* any, when it is not pretended to do so *now*, has not so much as the *Shew* of a good Reason for dissenting. But let it be thought, Sir, as good an one as you please, since it is *equally good*, nay, truly, *better*, against your *own* Churches, whether called *Presbyterian*, or *Independent*: For each of these discovered, in the Day of their Power, as much, and indeed, more, of that Spirit. There is not the least Appearance of *our* Church's having disquieted and oppressed any, on account of Religion, for more, now, than half a Century; and it has given thereby good Proof, that it is not *now*, whatever it may have been *heretofore*, of a *persecuting* Spirit. And tho' many Individuals among you are, doubtless, averse, equally, perhaps with yourself, or with the Church of *England*, to all manner of Persecution, yet we cannot be sure the same Christian and equitable Spirit would appear in *your* Churches, acting *collectively*, on any Occasion where they should have full Scope to shew *what Manner of Spirit they were of*. The Presumption, I think, lies rather *against* them, and will lie, 'till they get uppermost again, and have thereby an Opportunity to *let their Moderation be known to all Men*. — So, Sir, you see, this Reason is not only *as strong*, but really *stronger* against Communion with *your* Churches, than with *ours*.

I protest to you, Sir, I cannot but marvel, that these Gentlemen are not more afraid to scatter among you such Reasons (and, I suppose, they are the best they have) for dissenting, as, with the least turn of Thought, may be employed against themselves. This, surely, is great Temerity, or very
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unwise Management, unless it may be supposed they are so well acquainted with the stubborn Prejudices of their People, that they can safely rely upon them, and be assured, that whatever Reasons shall be offered them they will *accept as good*, without giving themselves the Trouble to sift and examine them, or view them in any other Light than they shall think proper to place them in. But for my own Part, I don't think you are all such Folks, and hope better Things of many of you. And as we are told by Monsieur *Pascal* of a certain Free-thinking Gentleman, saying to one of his Infidel Companions, *If you dispute at this rate*, you'll certainly make me a *Christian*, so, if these Gentlemen, your Ministers, *reason* at this rate, in Support of your Separation, I shall have great Hopes they will make not only *you*, but many others, good Churchmen.

For indeed, Sir, I am greatly mistaken, if I have not shewn, that their great and most popular Reasonings in the Defence of it, are frivolous and insufficient, and if now, at last, they appear so to *you*, Conformity, you must own, will be your Duty. If you think I have *failed* in *this* Part, and that your Objections, notwithstanding all I have said, are still good; yet, if you judge I have succeeded in the other Part, if you now find your Objections pinch yourselves, as much as *us*, if you plainly perceive (as now I hope you do) there are in *your* Churches, Inexpediences for Inexpediences, Defects for Defects, Blemishes for Blemishes, Irregularities and Abuses for Abuses and Irregularities in *ours*, your Obligation to Conformity still remains. In such a Case, you can't pretend any Obligation upon Conscience to oppose the establish'd Religion, by forming Parties against it, or by withdrawing your own Submission from it, but may as well conform, as dissent. And then, there
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are many *external Considerations*, and *Views of public Utility*, which will make it your *Duty*, and should *determine* you to do so. Your Conformity, Sir, to the establish'd Religion (*in that Case*) is but shewing a proper Deference and Respect to the Laws, and public Wisdom of your Country. It will be adding Strength and Security to the Government (for the establish'd Religion has been always esteemed the Pillar and Support of it) and be promotive of *civil Peace*. And as the *establish'd* is also the *general* Religion, embraced and professed by the *vast Majority of the People*, your falling in and complying with *that* will be pursuing the truest, the surest, and most effectual, as well as the most compendious Way for the restoring and establishing *Christian Peace* and Unity among us. It will be doing *your Part* towards putting an End to those Divisions that have so long troubled us, and bringing about that happy Union among us, which all good Christians and Protestants so ardently wish for, and pant after. These Considerations, which are of great Moment, I leave, Sir, upon your Mind, and earnestly commend you to God's Holy Guidance and Direction.

I am, Sir,

Your most humble Servant,

Nayland,

April, 19th 1745.

JOHN WHITE.

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APPENDIX,
CONTAINING

Some CONSIDERATIONS on the Lawfulness,
Expediency, and Necessity of requiring all
who are to be admitted to the Ministry,
or to any Ecclesiastical Preferment in the
Church of *England*, or to be Preachers or
Teachers in any Dissenting Congregation, to
subscribe the Articles of Faith and Religion.

And setting forth,

The Inconsistencies between the notorious Practices
of Dissenters, and the avowed Principles of *many*
of them touching that Matter.

APPENDIX

CONTAINING

Some Considerations on the Lawfulness
of Excommunication, and Necessity of requiring
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of them touching that Matter.

A P P E N D I X.

IN the *Second and Third Letters to a Gentleman Dissenting from the Church of England*, I have been retorting the most popular Reasons of Dissenters against Conformity, upon themselves. But because Subscription, (I mean *simple* Subscription without any regard to the Matter of it) altho' grievously exclaimed against by *many* Dissenters, is not yet alledged (so far as I know) by any Dissenting Writer, as a Reason against so much as Ministerial, and much less against Lay-Conformity to the Church, I thought it would be proper to reserve the Consideration of their practical Contradictions to their own Principles touching this Matter, to a Place by itself. And I have done it the rather, because what I have to offer upon this Head will not affect *all* the Dissenters, but only *a Part* of them, as will appear, in the Sequel, more at large. After premising, therefore, some Things concerning the Lawfulness, the Expediency, and Necessity of Subscription to Articles of Religion, required of those who would be received into the Ministry, I shall represent the professed Principles and Sentiments of *divers* Dissenters concerning that Matter, shewing that they esteem it a most unwarrantable Thing, and yet, at the same Time, submit, and do, of their own accords, other Things that are tantamount to it.

We hear, at every Turn of the Unreasonableness and intolerable Harshness of such Subscription, and how barbarous it is to *stretch the Consciences of Men to the Length of our own Notions*. This, we must know, is an ingenious Allusion to the famous

Story of the *Attic Robber*. And, in good Truth, it was an unhandſome thing to ſerve Strangers in the Manner they ſay he did. But if, inſtead of *dragging* them to his Bed, and *forcing* them to lie in it, and then cutting or ſtretching them to the Length of it, he had provided for them a great Variety of Beds, and bid every Man chuſe for himſelf, according to his Stature, and take his Reſt, he had never been the Theme and Execration of School-Boys; but would have paſſed in the World, and been tranſmitted down to us, for a moſt friendly and hofpitable Perſon. And if any, out of a fooliſh Ambition to lie in the richeſt Bed, while there were others *as warm, and more eaſy*, ſhould *ſecretly*, and *without the Knowledge of his Hoſt*, either *lop or ſtretch*, and put himſelf to *Torture*, to make himſelf *even* with it, he could only have blamed his own Folly. The Application of this is mighty eaſy. We have in *England* Religions good Store; and if the Eſta bliſhed does not ſuit the Size and Faſhion of any ones Conſcience, he is at Liberty to accommodate himſelf with another that may ſuit it better. But if, for covetous or ambitious Ends, he *will needs* be promoted in the eſta bliſh'd Church, and for that End, *will* violate and give a *ſecret* Wound to his Conſcience by *fraudulent* Subſcriptions, I know not whom he ſhould blame but himſelf. I hope, *not* the Church, which he thus infamous ly deceives, and impoſes upon by his Prevarication.

Sometimes we are aſk'd, what Directions there are in Scripture concerning Miniſters ſubſcribing Articles of Faith, and what Warrant and Authority we have *there* for ſuch a Practice. Why, the Scriptures require Miniſters *to take heed to their Doctrine, to ſhew Uncorruptneſs in it, and to hold the Myſtery of Faith in a good Conſcience*; and that the Church may have ſome Assurance of their doing ſo, or-
dain,

tain, that they be *first proved*, and then admitted, to their Office, *being found blameless*, 1 Tim. iii. 10. where the Apostle plainly intimates, and even in-joins some Trial and Probation of those who are to be advanced to the Ministry, as well in reference to their *holding the Mystery of Faith*, as to their keeping a *good Conscience*. But the Form and Method of Probation not being determined, that is evidently left to the Determinations of human Prudence, and the Discretion of Church Governors. And then, the Subscription-way, I guess, may be as *prudently* taken, as any other. The Church of *England* has chosen this way: The Church of *Scotland* has done the same, obliging all, not only before they are ordained, but before they are licensed to pray and preach as Probationers, to sign the *Westminster Confession*; and all the Protestant Churches beyond the Seas prove the Faith of their Candidates for the Ministry, either by Subscriptions, or solemn Oaths, or both, which they repeat upon divers Occasions. And some of these, particularly those of *France*, had got far beyond us in the Matter of Subscription, and carried it to other-guise Heights than is done here, as whoever will turn over Mr. *Quick's Synodicon* will plainly see. And if Subscription was no way founded on the Word of God, it is plainly dictated by common Sense, which cries loudly, that the Church has a Right to demand it, and that none need make any Scruple to comply with it. For what is more evident to common Sense than this, that *those to whom the Depositum of the Christian Faith is committed should be themselves sound in the Faith*, and give proper Evidence of their being so to those who are to put that Trust into their Hands; and this again, that none need make any Difficulty to subscribe with their Hands what they really believe with their Hearts.

As to the Expediency and Necessity of such Subscription, that is as great and evident as the Expediency and Necessity of preserving the Honour and Reputation of the Church, and the Purity of Religion, by preventing Diversity of Opinions. For if Subscription to Creeds and Forms of Orthodoxy was once laid aside, if the Doors of the Church were set wide open, and all that would, only owning the Scriptures to be the Word of God, might be admitted to her Ministry, that glorious Confusion Infidels pant after would come on apace, and Christianity, without their Help, would be soon writ and preach'd out of the World. Every Parish might have a System of Divinity peculiar to itself, nay, there might be divers in the same Parish. The Doctor, in the Morning, would teach his People *Orthodoxy*, and the Afternoon Preacher give them a Lecture of rank *Arianism*. The next Lord's Day a Disciple of *Socinus* finds Means to get into the Pulpit, and undertakes to confute both; and then, one after another, twenty Species besides of Hereticks or. Enthusiasts, for whom, at present, we have no Names, shall mount it, to give Vent to some Peculiarities of their own. This is the blessed State of Religion, which a promiscuous and undistinguishing Admittance into the sacred Ministry of all Persons, who still believe the Scriptures to be the Word of God, would introduce. Great Joy for Infidels and Libertines! It might, possibly, bring some of these Folks, now and then, to Church (as they go to the Bear-Garden) merely for Sport and Pastime. But those who are serious would have no Heart to go thither, and might think it better to stay at Home, mourn in Secret, and try to discover what is *true Religion and undefiled before God*, in their own Closets. And Men of weak Judgments would be in Danger of turning Scepticks,

Sceptricks, or of going over to downright Infidelity. This indeed might not immediately be the Case, tho' all Subscriptions were to be *now* removed. For the present Clergy, 'tis like, and I do believe, would be, in general, the same Men that they are *now*. But when *these* are gone off the Stage, and succeeded by others, who may differ, perhaps, as much in their Principles and Beliefs, as they do in their Countenances, then is the Time we may expect to taste the Fruits of this hopeful Scheme of Liberty.

I have not complimented, I hope, the present Clergy above what they deserve. For tho' it is said, some of them do indulge themselves in an unwarrantable Latitude of thinking, and have fallen away from the Catholick Faith which they have formerly subscribed to, I am persuaded there are not many of this Sort. Such as there are, 'tis like, if all Forms of Subscription that stand in their way, were removed, would, by Degrees, throw off their Disguise, and shew themselves, in their publick Administrations and Instructions, quite other Sort of Men, than they may now, possibly, appear to be. But as Things are at present, they will not commonly take the Boldness, in the Face of their Parishes, and in open Contradiction to their recorded Subscriptions, (which they may, and, perhaps, hope, they shall have Occasion to repeat) and to those Forms which they are daily using, to oppose the received Faith. At least, they will hardly do it by *express Negatives, by open avowed Attacks, but only by dark and doubling Expressions, distant Innuendos, and consequential Arguments*, which, as they will pass unobserved by Nineteen in Twenty of their Hearers, will not give that great and general Offence I have been just before representing. This was the Way of a late learned Doctor in his Sermons. *There are many Sentences scattered*

tered throughout, setting forth, or implying Arianism, as his *Right Reverend* Editor observes. But had it not been for Creeds and certain Forms of Prayer he was muzzled with, instead of Sentences scattered, up and down, implying Arianism, we should have had, in all likelihood, Arianism professed, and he would have been, in his Discourses from the Pulpit, as unreserved, as he is in his *Scripture-Doctrine of the Trinity*, and other Writings. In fine, if ever these Checks and Restraints shall be taken off, such Offences will come oftener from the Pulpit, and grow, gradually, more and greater, as the present Clergy wear away; and the Press, in concert with the Pulpit, will daily groan with new and strange Doctrines, as it has done, of late, with Harangues against Creeds, and Subscription to them.

There is Reason to believe a great Part of these have flowed from the Pens of *Dissenters*; and some doubtless have come from the *Infidel* Quarter. I am ready to do many Dissenters the Justice to own, that as they hold to sound and Catholic Principles, in Opposition to the Heresies now prevailing, so they are no *Enemies* to, but have been good *Advocates* for Creeds and Subscriptions to them against their own Brethren. But if we believe the Gentlemen of this latter Sort, subscribing the Doctrines of Christianity in any Form of Words of Man's devising, is *discrediting the Perfection of the Holy Scriptures*, and *throwing Dirt upon them*, *undermining the Principles of the Reformation*, and *laying the Foundation of Popery*, and *Encroachment upon Christian Liberty*, *encouraging Impositions*, *setting up a Tyrannical Power*, and even an *Inquisition in the Church*, nor can Truth and Peace be preserved (as one or two of them wildly say) *'till this Engine of the Devil be overthrown*. This, and a great deal more

more in the like Strain, may be found in the Writings of Non-Subscribers, with which the World swarmed somewhat above twenty Years ago, during the famous Controversy about the Trinity. And the Non-Subscribers, unless I am greatly mistaken, were a good Majority of the *London* Ministers. Whether they were, before that Time, of these Principles, or took them up, *as convenient at that critical Juncture*, to skreen themselves from any further Enquiry into their Faith, which might have ended in their being deprived of their publick Ministerial Usefulness, their Brethren for the Subscription, must be allowed to be the best Judges. But I, who know them no otherwise than by such of their Writings as have happened to fall into my Hands, am willing to embrace the former Opinion, as the most charitable, *viz.* that these, all along, were their settled Principles, and that they writ, at that Time, no otherwise of these Matters, than they were always used to think of them.

Who, now, would think any other, than that *these Gentlemen* ordain *their* Ministers, without asking any Questions about their Opinions and Beliefs? Who would not suppose, that they take in *all*, whatever Principles they are known to be of, or tho' nothing of their Principles be known more than this, that they are *Christians*? If I were to take it into my Head to become a Pastor to one of their Congregations, where my Principles were well known, might not I fairly expect not to be rejected, on those Accounts? And yet, if I should reckon upon *that*, I am afraid I should soon find I had reckoned wrong, and flattered myself too much. It runs strangely in my Head, I should stand but a bad Chance, and find it an up-hill Business to mount one of their Pulpits, with the Weight of all my *Liturgical, Prelatical, Catholic* Principles about me.

And

And if another was to offer himself to them, but, at the same Time, was resolved to keep his Principles to himself, and let them know of him no more than that he believed the Bible to be the Word of God, and all it contains to be true, could he reasonably suppose he should *not* be accepted? and yet I fancy he must *open* himself a little more than this comes to, before the Doors of the Meeting will be *open* to *him*. They will certainly demand, and he must give them, before he is admitted, some farther Proof and Evidence of his Orthodoxy. And if an *innocent Error* about the *Trinity* or *Incarnation* should chance to be no Bar to his Preferment, nor make him less acceptable to the People, yet there are other Points of more favourite Importance, wherein it will be expected he should be found *orthodox*. He must be an *Arminian*, to please some; an *Anti-Arminian*, and very staunch in the five Points, to be accepted of others. And I have been informed of a Congregation who were used to be called Presbyterians, the Heads of which, upon losing their Minister, who, it seems, for being an *Arminian*, had not been very acceptable to them, said among themselves — *They must now have an Independent, for the Presbyterians were not sound.*

Supposing, however, he gets in, and fancying himself well settled in his Congregation, begins to publish, either in Print, or Preaching, or Conversation, some Opinions that are distasteful to them; in such a Case, 'tis a Chance, if they are not for trying to eject him, and put another in his Place who shall come up to their own Standard; and some of the Orthodox Ministers in the Neighbourhood shall be called in to give a Sanction to their doings. We hear, at every Turn, of some Cases of this sort, and are often obliged with *Faithful Narratives* thereof.

That

That they are not such Enemies to all *inquisitory Forms of Tryals*, as, from some of their Writings, they may seem to be, is pretty evident from the Care that is previously taken to be rightly informed of the Faith and Principles of their Candidates for the Ministry. It should seem, by some Passages I have met with in their Writings, that these are regularly examined, not only as to their Learning, but to their Soundness also in the Faith. And Doctor Calamy, in his *short Account of Protestant Dissenters in England*, tells us, *they make, before they are solemnly ordained, a publick Confession of that Faith in which they engage to make it their Business to instruct others.* And this Confession of their Faith we often see accompany the Ordination Sermon, when it is published. I don't mightily like the Way. For, in these Forms, many Points of the greatest Importance *may* be omitted, and, probably, *often are.* And they *may* be drawn up in such general, such sliding, evasive, and equivocating Terms, as shall impose upon the Congregation, and the Ordainer too, at only one hearing. And that this is not a mere Fancy and groundless Suggestion, appears from a Book, intitled, *An Answer to Mr. Pierce's Western Inquisition*, p. 27, 28, 40. where we are told of no less than five or six Gentlemen, all mentioned by Name, *who seeming very sound as to the Doctrine of the Trinity, in the Confessions they made, at their Ordinations, afterwards appeared of different Sentiments, to the great Grief of several of their Ordainers, and that this Practice of Equivocation has been the Cause of most of the Trouble and Difficulty that the Ministers have laboured under.* By this we may plainly see, that their Method to prove the Faith of their Ministers is not so wise and effectual to answer the End, as Subscription to certain and well known Forms. But be
that

that as it will ; for that is not the Point I am now upon : But I am only observing, that they do impose, upon all Persons to be Ordained, this Test of their Faith and Orthodoxy. I ask now, Are not these Confessions of Faith *Human Explications* ? Are they not *Forms of Mens devising* ? Are they expressed in the Words of Scripture, and in them only ? Every body sees they are not. Do they not contain many Points, besides the Scriptures being written by Inspiration of God ? And is there any Difference (I mean as to the Iniquity of the Thing) between giving in, or pronouncing publickly a Confession of their Faith of their own composing, or, possibly transcribed from others, and subscribing to one offered by the Church ? If there be, pray tell me, wherein lies the Innocency of the one, and wherein the Iniquity of the other ?

There is one Gentleman of great Name among the Dissenters, and he is Mr. *Candler*, who seems to have the most frightful Notions of Subscription of any Writer I have yet met with. In his Account, it is not only an *unreasonable Thing*, but *pernicious to the Church of God, infamous in its Nature, unjust, Antichristian*, and almost every thing that is bad. Now I would enquire, if he has never been concerned in the Ordination of any ; and if he has, whether he did not exact such Confessions of the Ordained, but laid Hands on them, suddenly, upon their making only a *general Declaration of their believing the Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, and consenting to the Doctrine of Christ, as therein delivered*. I would enquire too, if he himself did not make such a Confession of *his* Faith, when *he* was ordained. I have Reason to think he did ; because I find Dr. *Calamy*, who says, as before mentioned, *their young Men who are Candidates for the Ministry, before they are Ordained, make a*
 Con-

Confession of their Faith, was the Ordainer of Mr. S. Chandler, whom I suppose to be the Gentleman I am now writing of. And he, to be sure, would not neglect what he says was the constant Practice of their Churches. And indeed I observe that the Doctor, in the Charge delivered to him, takes Notice, *that he had taken of him all fitting Precautions, as to his future Conduct, by certain Promises he made about a few necessary Things*. Here we have Mr. Chandler engaging himself, by certain Promises about some necessary Things, besides (I presume) the Scriptures being the Word of God, at his entering upon the Ministry, and to qualify himself for it. And 'tis Pity those Promises, and these necessary Things were not made publick, that we might have known what they were, how few, how many, and how necessary, which, in all likelihood, would have shewn, in a strong Light, the Inconsistency of this Gentleman's avowed Principles with his Practice.

So then, upon the whole of the Matter, they, too, with all their Pretences to Liberty, have an *Inquisition* of their own, (for so, I think, they have christened all Forms of Tryal concerning the Faith of Ministers) and which all of them, Subscribers and Non-Subscribers, so far as appears, have agreed to submit to, in order to explore the Consciences, to sift out the Faith of all Aspirants to the Ministry, and be secure of it.

But they not only exact ² Confessions of Faith (which

¹ They not only exact Confessions of Faith of their Candidates for the Ministry, but something of that Sort of all Communicants, unless Mr. Dorrington, who *should know* what their Practices are, has misinformed us. He says, They require of them who come to the Lord's Supper a Confession of their Faith, which must be given to the Pastor at least, and perhaps before some of the ruling Elders of the Church. So that, as great Enemies as they would seem to be to all Tests of Orthodoxy, when in their ill Humour they are writing against the Establish'd Church for imposing

(which are all one with Subscriptions, saying only in Point of external Form) from their Ministers, at their Ordination, but, in Obedience to the Laws, do actually subscribe the Articles, just as we do, to qualify themselves for officiating in any Congregation for the Exercise of Religion. This, I dare say, is not generally known. It is commonly supposed that the Creeds and Articles of the Church of *England* are subscribed only by the Clergy of the Church of *England*. But be it known to all the People of *Great-Britain*, that there is not, in the Kingdom, one Dissenting Minister, who has complied with the Terms of the Toleration, but has solemnly subscribed the Articles, bating three or four, which they are excused from subscribing by Reason the subject Matter of them is contrary to the profest Principles of Dissenters, and has also subscribed the three Creeds, (yes, the *Athanasian*, as well as the other) *that they ought thoroughly to be received, and believed, and may be proved by most certain Warrants of Holy Scripture.* The Act of Toleration (I have put in the Margin the enacting Clause) expressly requires

imposing them, their own very Laity are not exempt from them.

And be it farther enacted, by the Authority aforesaid, That no Person Dissenting from the Church of *England* in holy Orders, or pretending to holy Orders, nor any Preacher or Teacher of any Congregation of Dissenting Protestants that shall make and subscribe the Declaration aforesaid, and take the said Oaths at the General or Quarter Sessions of the Peace to be held for the County, Town, Parts or Division where such Person lives, which Court is hereby impowered to administer the same, and shall also declare his Approbation of and subscribe the Articles of Religion mentioned in the Statute made in the 13th Year of the Reign of the late Queen *Elizabeth*, except the 34th, 35th, and 36th, and these Words of the 20th Article, *viz.* ["The Church has Power to decree Rites and Ceremonies and Authority in Controversies of Faith, and yet"] shall be liable to any of the Pains or Penalties mentioned in an Act made the 17th Year of the Reign of King

Charles

requires of *them* such Subscription, as a Condition of their being exempted from the Pains and Penalties of some former Acts; and they do, it is to be supposed, as the Law requires. And yet these Gentlemen, all the while, are writing, with as much Freedom, or with as noble and generous a Warmth, (as they, doubtless, will call it) against Subscription, as if *they* were under no manner of Obligation to subscribe, and did nothing at all of that Nature.

They say, and "Mr. Chandler, in particular, says, *Subscriptions have ever been a Grievance in the Church of God.* And, doubtless, the making a Confession of their Faith, at their Ordinations, just in the Manner that they now, of themselves, do, would have been, too, a *Grievance*, if it had been required by Law. But is it not an Iniquity, too, in his, and their Judgments? A *mere* Grievance *may*, and *ought*, in some Cases, to be submitted to. But will they submit to a confessed Iniquity? Why, really they do. In their *Reasons*

Charles the 2d entitled, "An Act for restraining Non-Conformists from inhabiting in Corporations," nor the Penalties mentioned in the aforesaid Act made in the two and twentieth Year of his said late Majesty's Reign, or by Reason of such Persons preaching at any Meeting for the Exercise of Religion; nor to the Penalty of One hundred Pounds mentioned in an Act made in the 13th and 14th of King *Charles* the second, entitled, "An Act for the Uniformity of publick Prayers and Administration of Sacraments and other Rites and Ceremonies; and for establishing the Form of making, ordaining, and consecrating of Bishops, Priests, and Deacons in the Church of *England*," for officiating in any Congregation for the Exercise of Religion permitted and allowed by this Act.

Provided always, that the making and subscribing the said Declaration and taking the said Oaths, and making the Declaration of Approbation and Subscription to the said Articles, in manner as aforesaid, by every respective Person, or Persons herein before-mentioned, at such General or Quarter Sessions of the Peace, as aforesaid, shall be then and there entered of Record at the said Court, &c. &c.

"*History of Persecution*, p. 428.

for

for not subscribing the Paper offered at Salters-Hall, they say, *The Subscription there insisted on is beyond even what the Legislature itself requires of us. For the Legislature has thought fit to require only our once subscribing; and this being made a necessary Condition of exercising our Ministry, we should be highly blameable to neglect that Work, by refusing to comply with what is required of us, when we can do it with a safe Conscience. But we have always thought that human Declarations of Faith were far from being eligible, on their own Account. And in a Postscript to their Advices, they farther say, In some Points, and in some Cases, we may, no doubt, submit to legal Demands, when yet we ought, by no means, to countenance it, where there is no Pretence of Authority. Here indeed, where they are speaking of their own Subscribing to our Articles of Religion, they speak somewhat Tenderly against Subscription. 'Tis only said of it, that 'tis far from being eligible on its own Account, and what ought, by no means, to be countenanced; which, yet, plainly, imports, that they esteem it a wrong and unwarrantable Thing. But at other Times, when their subscribing is not thought of, or there is no Occasion to make mention of it, they run riot upon it, representing it (as I before observed) as a giving up of their Christian Liberty, throwing Dirt upon the Scriptures, and sapping the Foundations of the Reformation. Yet all this, it seems, they can do with a safe Conscience, when Law and Authority require it, and they can't exercise their Ministry without it. Nay, they should think themselves highly blameable, if they were to refuse it. These Principles, methinks, would as well justify or excuse their Ministerial Conformity to the Church of England. For, in that Case, it would be only saying, that, "tho' subscribing the Liturgy, and*
" doing

“ doing some other Things as necessary Conditions
 “ of exercising our Ministry *are far from being*
 “ *eligible on their own Accounts, and ought, by all*
 “ *means, to be discountenanced*; yet, as they are
 “ *legally demanded*, they may be complied with,
 “ *with a safe Conscience, and we should be highly*
 “ *blameable to neglect the Work of the Ministry, by*
 “ *refusing to comply with what is required of us.*”

These are your sound and judicious Casuists! These your consistent Protestants! These your Friends of Liberty! Strange! that Gentlemen, who, in other Cases are so fond of Liberty, as to declare, they will not submit to any Terms of Communion that are *legally demanded*, and hold it sinful to comply with such Things as they own to be *indifferent* in their Natures, *because they are imposed by Authority*, should, in this Case, comply with what they declare to be *unjustifiable, and infamous* in its Nature, *because Authority imposes it.*

Quo teneam vultus mutantem Protea nodo?

’Tis true, this is done to preserve their supposed Usefulness, and *that Good may come on’t.* But this will sound strangely in all Christian and Protestant Ears. And therefore, it is hoped, if they cannot alter their Principles, they will their Practices, and if they continue of Opinion, that Subscribing is such an unwarrantable Thing, they will openly refuse it. But if they cannot be brought to do *that*, the next wisest Thing they can do is, to *subscribe and hold their Tongues*, and say not a Syllable about it.

This writing against Subscription with Subscribing at the same Time, appears to me a most surprising Procedure. It is a perfect Riddle; and one knows not how to unfold it, unless it can be done by the Supposition of a *double Doctrine*, a *vulgar* and a *secret* Theology, the former to be *delivered*

out among the People, the latter to be kept in for the Use and Instruction of a select Number, such as are initiated into their Mysteries. And as the ancient Sages (unless Mr. Warburton be mistaken) used to inculcate upon the People certain Principles and Doctrines which they did not believe themselves, for their Utility, because they were necessary to support a Civil Establishment; so these, it may be thought, scatter Prejudices among our People against Subscription for their Tendency to overthrow a Religious one, all the while keeping up a Regard to them among themselves, that so, they may preserve some tolerable Order, Unity, and Purity in their own Churches. If this be their Policy, 'tis certainly right, and I cannot but commend them for being so wise in their Generations. For the Exemption of the Clergy from all Obligation to subscribe (if they could but prevail to obtain it for us) would be as proper an Engine as can ever be employed for the Subversion of the Establish'd Church, which seems to have been the Thing in view, for some past Years.

I shall dismiss this Subject, after remarking one or two Things concerning the Conduct of the Gentleman before mentioned, in his *History of Persecution*, in regard to the Cause now before us. In that Book he has thought fit to bestow a whole Chapter (which he seems to think no Digression from his Subject) against Subscription. But all the Way, speaks of it as a slavish and corrupt Practice, which the Church and her Clergy alone had any Concern in. *The Clergy* (says he, p. 432.) *of the Church of England are bound to subscribe the XXXIX Articles.* Is there any Difference between subscribing XXXIX, and XXXV Articles and a Half, as all the Dissenting Ministers are obliged to do? But not a single Syllable is said, nor the least Hint

Hint given, here or elsewhere, that I can find, of *that*. And so, all the Imputations he was about fastening upon Subscription were to fall, in their full Weight, upon the Church only. Is it possible to think that a Gentleman of his confessed Acuteness and Capacity could write a Chapter against Subscription, of twelve or thirteen Pages (besides what he has scattered, up and down, in his Book) without calling to Mind, that he and his Brethren were concerned, as well as we, in this Affair of Subscription, and as much interested in the Defence and Justification of it? If the Reader is so charitably disposed as to think he *might*, and probably *did* do so, I am content. But for my own Part, as I should be loth to be found deficient in *real* Charity, so I would not be willingly remarked for a *fulsome Affectation* of it; and, therefore, make no Difficulty to declare, that, to me, it does not seem likely, that *such a Man* as Mr. Gbandler, who seems (it must be said) pretty much awake whenever he sets Pen to Paper, should be so very unreflecting, as not once, from Beginning to End, to call it to Remembrance, that he, and his Brethren were Subscribers, as well as we. I should rather think it would be continually running in his Head, and he would not know how to get it out.

Then again, not content with loading the Clergy with the Charge of *mere* subscribing, (which, in his Opinion, is heavy enough) he *will* have it, that their Subscriptions are *fraudulent* and *evasive*. *It must be*, (he says, pag. 435.) *by some such Evasions* (as he had before mentioned) *that Arians subscribe to Athanasian Creeds, and Arminians to Principles of rigid Calvinism. This the Clergy have been, again and again, reproached with, even by the Enemies of Christianity.* Yes, we know it, the Enemies of Christianity and the Writers on the Dissenting Side

have commonly, of late Days, joined together, in their Reproaches and Praises of the same Persons. *And I am sorry to say it* (continues he) *they have not been able to wipe off the Scandal from themselves.* Did he not now know, or did he forget, or, I ask again, would he have had it been concealed, that the Dissenting Ministers, who are all Subscribers, are, some of them, Arians (more, I dare say, in Proportion) and many of them Arminians (if they must be so called) as well as our Clergy? And have they been able to wipe off the Reproach of Subscribing Athanasian (as he loves to call them, instead of Catholic) Principles, and rigid Calvinistic ones, if indeed our Articles were such? In another Place, p. 69. he asks, *Do all the Clergy really believe, that the Fault and Corruption of the Nature of every Man does, in every Person born into the World, deserve God's Wrath and Damnation; that we have no Power to do good Works acceptable to God, without the Grace of God by Christ preventing us; that Works done without the Inspiration of the Spirit are not pleasant to God, yea, that they have the Nature of Sin. Or rather, do not the Generality of those who subscribe them, if they put any Sense upon them at all, draw them a little aside, and put their own Comment upon them?*—Not that he knows; or, if they do, the Dissenting Ministers may be supposed to do the same. For he and every body knows, these are no distinguishing Points between Churchmen and Dissenters, and the one is as like as the other to be dissatisfied about them. And that Mr. Chandler knows one Dissenter, at least, who really is so, and when he subscribed them, if he put any Sense at all upon them, drew them a little aside, and put his own Comment upon them, we have pretty good Evidence in this Place.

After all, considering the heavy Charges brought by this Gentleman, and so many of his Brethren,

against Subscription, it is almost uncharitable to suppose that they *do* subscribe, as by Law they are bound to do, and one would really suspect, that they *neglect* or *evade* it, and take the Benefit of the Toleration, without complying with the most essential Condition of it.—But this is a Subject too nice and delicate for my handling: And, therefore, *here* I resolve to break off, leaving the intelligent Reader for the rest to his own Reflections.

F I N I S.



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